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THE LORD'S SUPPER  
A STUDY

A DISSERTATION  
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We, the undersigned, hereby certify that we have  
read and recommend to the School of Graduate  
Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE  
LORD'S SUPPER - A STUDY, submitted by Ted Stanley  
Kolber, B. Sc., in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of  
Divinity.



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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of the Lord's Supper is receiving special attention by scholars of every denomination. At a time when talks on church unity are at their peak, the failure of Christians to be able to partake of the Lord's Supper around one common table because of doctrinal differences is seen as nothing short of being a scandal. This is the situation nevertheless. The nature of the division is recognized by most concerned, but many feel that they cannot conscientiously commune with their neighbor at the same table. Hard as the task of unity may seem, those striving towards the eventual union of the churches have to work within this framework.

It is not the intention of the writer to attempt to produce a solution, nor is it his intention to provide any information that might be considered as new to the whole problem. The purpose of this study is simply to have a look at the Lord's Supper; to see what ideas lie behind it and see if possible what Jesus himself intended by it. With this in mind, the writer intends to examine the basic idea behind the Supper, i.e. the Covenant. Because of the Supper's sacrificial setting, a consideration of the Old Testament concept of sacrifice would be in order. The meal was referred to as the Passover meal, so the Passover Feast is examined as is the relationship between the two. The question of how the total sacrifice of Christ is related to the Lord's Supper is also looked at.



To see the effect of history on the Lord's Supper, the early church's position is considered as are the modern day positions of four major denominations. The particular four were picked because the writer felt that these would provide an overall picture of what the churches believe about the Supper. The study concludes with a chapter on what is presently being done in the attempt to unify the various positions.



## CHAPTER I

### THE HEBREW IDEA OF THE COVENANT

"In the beginning God . . . ." These are the opening words of the Bible and contained in them is the conviction of those who are related to him that whatever is done or accomplished was first initiated by him. He creates, he governs and above all he desires to have fellowship with those created in his image. In order to do this, he has to make himself known; he has to reveal himself. Just how he does this, or how he decides or even to whom he will reveal himself has never been quite clearly understood. It stands clear, though, that at one point in history he did reveal himself to a small group of people and through their leader, he made an agreement with them. According to the agreement or covenant he promised to be their God and they in turn promised to be his people. This covenant was nullified when the people were sent into exile. The coming of the Christ was an indication that God had initiated a new covenant. This new covenant was ratified in an upper room at what is now known as the Lord's Supper.

The covenant idea is basic to life itself, though the origin of the word is obscure. J. O. Cobham in his article on the word in The Theological Word Book of the Bible, prefers the explanation that the Hebrew berith (**בְּרִית**) is equivalent to the Assyrian beritu which



means bond or fetter. Strictly speaking, the covenant is used to create an artificial brotherhood where a natural one does not already exist. It involves, then, not only the relationship between man and God, but also his relationship with any other person be it his family, neighbor, or countryman. Because of this basic quality underlying the whole of a person's life, it is the writer's intention to examine the smallest covenantal group--the family. As the person's sphere of influence widens, he comes into contact with others. Any friendship gained implies that a covenant has been made. The apex of this outreach comes when a covenant is made with the Creator. Each of these relationships is examined in turn.

#### THE FAMILY

The individual in the Old Testament was always part of a larger group. He was never alone, but was part of a family or community. The ideal family was characterized by "Shalom", a peaceful harmony, and as such provided an opportunity for the growth of the individual. This harmony implied the absence of strife.

Then Abraham said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen; for we are kinsmen.'<sup>1</sup>

The family was the source of life for the individual.

Just as the branch not only owes its existence to the trunk and the root but constantly sucks its nourishment from it,

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 13:8.



in the same manner the individual holds his life only in connection with his family.<sup>2</sup>

This would explain David's reluctance to have his army battle his son Absalom. To fight was the only way for David to withstand a revolt by his son. Yet the thought of battling his offspring was so unnatural that it would have been the same as having to cut off his own limb.

And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite. Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him."<sup>3</sup>

And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.'<sup>4</sup>

So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people; for the people heard that day, 'The king is grieving for his son'.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect of the family was that it determined the individual's character. The person was so because of his family past and present.

And he (Gideon) said to him, 'Pray, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.'<sup>6</sup>

If he changed his status up or down, the family of which he was a part moved accordingly. The family unit was dependent upon the peace within it. Any disruption of this harmony meant that the individual's life was crippled.

<sup>2</sup> Johs. Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture, III & IV, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 16:11.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Samuel 18:5.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Samuel 19:2.

<sup>6</sup> Judges 6:15.



## THE COVENANT

To enter into a relationship apart from the family i.e., to become friends with another individual brought with it the same ideas. Friendship was a union of two individuals who agreed to be ruled by a common will. The union, if it became deep enough, often came into conflict with the ties of the family. The classic example of this was Jonathan's friendship with David and the resulting conflict with Saul, his father.

The distinction between kinship and friendship was one of birth, but the Old Testament referred to both as a peace-making or Covenant.

The former means a state prevailing in these united; the latter,<sup>7</sup> the community with all the privileges and duties implied in it.<sup>7</sup> Covenant had come to mean primarily a relationship entered into by strangers but the result nevertheless was a family relationship. Thus to enter into a covenant was to make peace. Within such a covenant relationship, there was a common aim. As the union became more intimate, the character of the relationship took on that of the stronger of the two. The weaker member made a covenant in order to enjoy the other's strength, while the stronger entered into the covenant for the common prosperity achieved by so doing. Any prior points of controversy had to be laid aside. Manslaughter within the relationship was out of the question, but enemies of either side became common enemies of both.

<sup>7</sup>

Pederson, Israel, Its Life and Culture, p. 285.



When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to greet him, and to congratulate him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him; for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi.<sup>8</sup>

A covenant was generally made with one purpose in mind, but because of the nature of the individual, the terms of the covenant spread. A typical example was the growth of the covenant between the kinsmen of Hamor and the house of Jacob. The Israelites had been in Canaan but a short time. Contact between the two was inevitable. An act of violence occurred when Shechem, son of Hamor, ravished Dinah, daughter of Leah, Jacob's wife. Shechem desired to marry Dinah. Such a request would involve both houses, and Jacob agreed only on the condition that all the fellow kinsmen of Hamor would be circumcised.

Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male of you be circumcised. Then we will give our daughter to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people.

Later, the prophets saw the dangers of such a covenant but what was made could not be undone without a breach of the covenant principle itself.

To strengthen the covenant there was usually an exchange of gifts. These according to Pedersen lay in the realm of good-will, rather than mere sentiment, and became symbolic of the covenant--

<sup>8</sup> 2 Samuel 8:9 and 10.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 34:15 and 16.



its obligations and implications.

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his girdle.<sup>10</sup>

Further to this, certain rites were generally observed. A handshake -

Because he despised the oath and broke the covenant, because he gave his hand and yet did all these things, he shall not escape.<sup>11</sup>

A kiss -

Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, 'Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel?'<sup>12</sup>

If the covenant was an important one, the parties shared in a common meal. The one who gave the meal was the one who would predominate.

When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. And Abner said to David, 'I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my Lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.'<sup>13</sup>

If the depth of the covenant were felt through the presence of the divine, the meal became a means of consecration. The covenant was then solemnized at a holy place together with the offering of sacrifices.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Samuel 18: 3 and 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 17:18.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 10:1.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Samuel 3:20 and 21.



And all the citizens of Shechem came together, and all Beth-mille, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.<sup>14</sup>

Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!<sup>15</sup>

The importance of the covenant idea in Hebrew thought is summarized by Pedersen.

One is born of a covenant and into a covenant, and wherever one moves in life, ones makes a covenant or acts on the basis of an already existing covenant. If everything that comes under the term of covenant were dissolved, existence would fall to pieces, because no soul can live an isolated life. It not only means that it cannot get along without the assistance of others; it is in direct conflict with its essence to be something apart.

It can only exist as a link of a whole, and it cannot work and act without working in connection with other souls and through them. Therefore, the annihilation of the covenant would not only be the ruin of society, but the dissolution of each individual soul.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE COVENANT OF JAHWEH WITH ISRAEL

If the persons entering into the covenant were nearly equal in status, both parties would have certain rights and certain obligations. If, however, there was a marked difference in status as in the case of a king and one of his vassals, then the king would have all the rights and the vassal, all the obligations. Any rights the

<sup>14</sup>Judges 9:6.

<sup>15</sup>Psalm 50:5.

<sup>16</sup>Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture, p. 308.



vassal was given and any obligations the king accepted was done at the discretion of the king. But this was done only out of his generosity. This was the type of agreement that was reached at Sinai.

At Mount Sinai, about the year 1300 B.C., a covenant was entered into by a small band of wandering Israelites under the leadership of one called Moses and a God they referred to as Jahweh. According to A. B. Davidson, in The Theology of the Old Testament this covenant marked another step in the gradual progression of God's relationship with his creation.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.<sup>17</sup>

The Sabbath was a symbol of the covenant made between God and creation. After the flood, the rainbow appeared as a symbol of another covenant--one with mankind. With Abraham, the covenant was a promise of a people. At Sinai, it was a moral covenant with a people that was made. The symbol of this covenant was the ten commandments. In essence, Jahweh demanded an exclusive loyalty and a right relationship.

The covenant itself was made with the people of Israel; the individual Israelite was part of it only inasmuch as he was a member of the people of Israel. This was not a definite number but rather a group which could alter in size. Thus, the people of Israel at the time of David were considered to be as much a part of the covenant as were the original members under Moses.



Once this covenant was accepted it meant that Israel belonged to Jahweh. He was to be their God. Other gods may exist, but for Israel, they were to serve Jahweh only. Anything they did, whether it was to swear or curse, to pray, to sacrifice, was to be done in the name of Jahweh.

The people, including Moses, had had other gods prior to the covenant. The old customs and practices were not expected to be thrown out completely, they were now to be related to Jahweh. This relationship extended into the community life as well to include property and morality. A wrong committed against a neighbor was now a wrong committed against Jahweh. Moral obedience was a basic requirement. Six of the ten commandments refer to their relationship with each other. Whatever be the source of the so-called Covenant Code (Exodus 21:1 - 23:33) be it the ancient Code of Hammurabi or some other ethical code of the time, the moral behaviour of the people of Israel was to be the response of their loyalty to Jahweh. As for Jahweh, it was understood that he was to be Israel's God. She expected him to help her whenever she was in need.

The scope of the covenant according to Ludwig Koehler in Old Testament Theology was of necessity a narrow one. Several features which were to prove stumbling blocks later on were not considered in the early stages. Applying to people as a whole, the covenant was not concerned with the individual as such. Whether an Israelite was sick or well, whether he lived or died, was not a concern of Jahweh's because the covenant lived on in the people. And, as a further restriction in the terms, the "people of Israel" were



considered to be the men alone. The children, the women, the slaves, the non-Israelites were classed as possessions and hence were ineligible to be part of the covenant. Because Jahweh was not bound up with any land be it Egypt, or the wilderness, he was considered as having nothing to do with nature or anything connected with the earth. Mount Sinai was looked upon simply as the place where the covenant was made. Similarly, Jahweh's connection with creation and his relationship to other peoples were thoughts too advanced to have even been considered let alone decided upon. The most that can be said is summed up by G. Ernest Wright in The Faith of Israel, an article from the Interpreter's Bible.

Since national law was the duty of kings to provide and administer in the ancient world, the God of Israel was first apprehended as King and Lord, who rescued a people, formed them into a nation, and bound them to him in a relationship of servants to a ruler. He did not force them into this relationship; he offered it to them as a gracious act. He promised to be their king who would provide justice for them, together with salvation and security from those who would oppress them. When they accepted this offer, they in turn made their promises to obey and serve their ruler. They were to hearken and to be obedient to his will.<sup>18</sup>

Wright, though, in contrast with Koehler gives the individual more recognition in respect to his relationship to the community as a whole. The law was given to the community but Jahweh's direct use of "Thou shalt. . ." was aimed at the individual. Man, according to Wright, was not a non-entity but had a definite place in the society of the time.

<sup>18</sup> The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. I, p. 355.



Man as man was not lost in tribal or mass society, but was given his place and function within it. Individuality and community were thus held in proper balance. In the covenant with the nation each man was bound to God in the realm of will; he was called upon to obey his Lord. As a result, life assumed a meaning and a dignity unknown elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

As the history of the people of Israel progressed, there were several significant changes made in the covenant idea. The immigration into Canaan brought with it a few problems as to covenant relationship. The people of Israel were now dwellers with a fixed location. Jahweh had promised to protect them in case of battle, but would he guarantee their crop; would he ensure that their belongings would not be taken from them, be they the family or the household goods? If Jahweh would do this in the form of a continual blessing and not merely when he was called upon, then it would require a continual effort to acknowledge him. To have this God of fertility which was what was involved in the desired blessing, meant that now Israel had to accept a practice of worship and service--referred to by Koehler as the "Cult". The people of Canaan prior to the arrival of the Israelites had already adopted a cult with their own god or gods as the case might be. The problem now was to relate Jahweh to the practices of these indigenous settlers, the Canaanites.

Before they entered the land of Canaan, the people of Israel were without a land and without a history. Now they were in possession of some land. Because of this, concluded the Israelites, Jahweh must not only be the God of this land; he must have promised it to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 356.



them "in the beginning". It follows from this that every aspect of the land was theirs as well--the fertility and the holy places where the powers of fertility were especially noticeable. The cult of Canaan became the cult of Jahweh by appropriation. Like the erasure of names in present day Russia and the replacing of them with the current popular choice; so the Israelites replaced the old gods with their own. For the most part the idea of the covenant was seriously weakened, but it came as a primary reaction to an enlarged concept and therefore should be judged in this light.

During the reign of Solomon, the temple was built in Jerusalem. It was, strictly speaking, just a royal chapel. But as the abode of Jahweh the temple became a symbol of the people. David had given them an esprit de corps and then under Solomon's lead the people became a state. Jahweh used to be thought of as inhabiting Horeb or Sinai or more usually it was an undescribed, unspecified place within the range of call of the people. Now, he was located in the temple at Jerusalem. More specifically, he was located within a private chamber in the temple and available only to a select few.

With the growth of the state, it was only natural that the people began to think of their relationship to other states. Such things as position, power, prosperity were compared. How did Jahweh stand up against the gods of these other states? The belief that God is one, is taken for granted in the twentieth century. To believe that he is the creator of the universe, that he rules and governs it; that all men owe their existence to him and are redeemed by him is basic to the Christian faith. For the present age, it would be hard



to imagine a time when this was not so. But up to the prophet Amos' time this was not even hinted at. In the book of Amos, however, several references are made that start the people thinking in this direction.

Right at the start, several prophecies of doom are addressed to the surrounding states, and one to his own. The suggestion is that Jahweh is related not only to Israel but to the surrounding states as well.

Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Kopher and the Aramaeans from Kir?<sup>20</sup>

The distinct covenant relationship is maintained, but the other states take on a proximity closer than that of distance alone.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.<sup>21</sup>

The other gods were still around; the world was still the immediate area but the concept of God was broadening. Jahweh was now God of the peoples; he was God of history.

The recognition of other states as part of Jahweh's family brought with it the question as to how these states were related to each other. Because the covenant had been made with Israel, did it mean that she was in a more favoured position? That there was special consideration given can be inferred from the promise made to Abraham. It can be said, too, that the offer of Jahweh was made to

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<sup>20</sup>Amos 9:7.

<sup>21</sup>Amos 3:2.



all peoples but it was only Abraham and later Moses who responded. The emphasis, though, seems to be on the idea of election. Jahweh chose Israel to be his special people. The idea was not made too explicit until the time of the exile, and even here it remained for Deutero-Isaiah to make the clear-cut pronouncements. "I chose thee, I do not cast thee away."<sup>22</sup>

With the exile and the fall of the Southern kingdom in 586 B.C., the covenant relationship changed somewhat. Living in exile in a strange land with gods of its own should have caused no concern; they had experienced these same conditions in Canaan. The hopelessness of the situation was the fact that they had been deprived of their homeland--a promised land at that.

Without a country, it seems rather pointless to talk of a people. And without a "people of Israel", the covenant was meaningless. Technically speaking, then, the old covenant was dissolved and a new one would have to be made. But land or no land, the Israelite still felt a kinship with Jahweh. His main concern was to re-establish a homeland. But until this was possible he tried to remain loyal to Jahweh. The community of Jahweh was composed of many little groups, each with its own place of worship and instruction, the synagogue. Later, when the temple was re-established, the synagogue remained as the centre of activity for those communities throughout the surrounding areas which were loyal to Jahweh. In the midst of seeming

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<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 41:9.



failure, Jahweh emerged victorious, for now he was not just a local god, or even one among many; He was God.

"... that you may know and believe and understand that I am he; before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me."<sup>23</sup>

The covenant had been made with the people of Israel. Now that the old one was no longer valid, a new covenant would have to be made. That Israel had continually broken the old covenant was not to be denied. The prophets bore witness to the break, both as to their loyalty:

Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord, for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.<sup>24</sup>

and the moral response:

Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes--they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and turn aside the way of the afflicted.'<sup>25</sup>

Was there perhaps the possibility that the new covenant would be one that could inspire loyalty; one that would make up the deficiencies of the old? The idea could best be summed up with the oft-quoted passage from Jeremiah.

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 43:10.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 2:12 and 13.

<sup>25</sup> Amos 2:6 and 7a.



Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.<sup>26</sup>

The new covenant was made when the "time was full."<sup>27</sup> It was made with the "world"<sup>28</sup> and anyone who "believed"<sup>29</sup> was eligible to be part of it.

#### CONCLUSION

Out of the desert emerged a wandering band of nomads, conscious of one thing above all else--that Jahweh was their God and they were his people. The whole of their life was permeated by a consciousness of this relationship. As the years went by, their knowledge of him matured. It took the exile to add the finishing touch. The very thing which had dissolved the covenant made some

<sup>26</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34.

<sup>27</sup> Galatians 4:4.

<sup>28</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>29</sup> John 3:16.



700 years earlier, had also dissolved the last of the gods and made Jahweh supreme.

The covenant which had been broken many times in the past was now voided. The god of a small group of select people had become the God of all peoples. But in spite of these things many of this group insisted that Jahweh was still their own God. All that was required was for them to remain loyal to him and the covenant would again be valid. While a few looked forward to the day when Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant would be fulfilled, the majority thought that with their return to the promised land the old relationship would be restored.

If these same Israelites preferred the old covenant to the hopes of a new one, they cannot be condemned for it. It was as a result of their experiences, their misfortunes that the world was able to come to an understanding of their God. It was because of them, their successes and failures that the new covenant became possible at all. Apart from these people, God's revelation in Jesus would have been meaningless. The words spoken in the upper room are significant for us because prior to this there had been a group of people who dared place themselves into the hands of their God. The Old Covenant had served its purpose.



## CHAPTER 11

### SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The idea of offering gifts to a supernatural power is as old as antiquity. One can only surmise that as soon as man became conscious of powers beyond himself he tried to gain their favour. Man felt dependent upon these for his well being and so whether the power was in a storm, the raging fire, whether it was in a god of fertility or whether it was Jahweh himself, he tried to maintain a relationship with it. This he did in the form of gifts and because the power was usually thought of in human terms, the gifts were items which appealed to the givers themselves. If the power were personalized and referred to as a god, then the offering could properly be termed a sacrifice.

As to the origin of the sacrifice, this cannot be definitely pinpointed. Biblical references give no clue. The account of the sacrifice made by Cain and Abel is the first mentioned, but the purpose was taken for granted. Abraham's willingness to offer his son may have been used as a test, but the idea of having a burnt offering was also taken for granted. In the account of the Exodus, the idea of sacrifice was used as a reason for the Israelites wanting to go into the wilderness.



Afterward Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'<sup>1</sup>

It would be easy to conclude from the above that sacrifices were present from the beginning of time and indeed, this would not meet with too much disagreement were the person to consider it literally or whether he were to consider it from the standpoint of modern archaeology. Sacrifices were made wherever traces of man are to be found.

The purpose of sacrifice in the Old Testament was to maintain a relationship with Jahweh, the God of Israel. The relationship was given a special name, that of holiness. This the people were to maintain at all times.

What is holy has its value in itself by virtue of its sovereign power. But it is not immutable; holiness can be acquired and lost, just as it can deteriorate and be renewed. If all holiness vanished, life would perish because the blessing draws its nourishment from holiness. But it is in man's power to contribute to the renewal of holiness; by so doing he will secure the maintenance of his world and his own life. This life-sustaining activity is exercised through the cult in the holy places. . . . The chief element of which is the sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

At first the offering was just a matter of procedure, i.e. it was an expression of the individual's natural desire. At each of the three harvest seasons: the barley, the wheat, and the fruit, the offering of the first fruits was made.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 5:1.

<sup>2</sup> Johs. Pedersen, Israel, Its Life and Culture, III and IV, p. 299.



And you shall observe the feast of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.<sup>3</sup>

This was done in order to sanctify the remainder of the crop and to ensure an abundant yield. Similarly, the keepers of the flocks and herds offered the first born of the sheep and oxen.

All the firstling males that are born of your herd and flock you shall consecrate to the Lord your God.<sup>4</sup>

In the latter case, the holiness was restored by setting free the blood in which the soul or life principle was present in a special degree. The whole of the animal was sanctified as was the rest of the offspring. The giver shared in the sanctification and this was further increased when he, along with his fellows, shared in the remains.

The place at which the offering was made varied. It is not clear where Cain and Abel made theirs. Abraham was told to sacrifice upon one of the mountains in the land of Moriah. The Israelites in Egypt wanted to sacrifice in the desert, presumably at a mountain. Later when a house of the Lord was built the command was to bring the offering there. From the story of Jacob's dream, it could be assumed that wherever God made his presence known, that place was deemed holy, a rock placed at the spot and any sacrifices to be made were to be offered there.

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 34:22.

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 15:19.



Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it . . . .' So Jacob arose early in the morning, and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel . . . and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house.<sup>5</sup>

The sacrifice of the first born brought with it the problem of what to do with the first born of humans, i.e. child sacrifices. In one case they were approved.

You shall not delay to offer from the fulness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The first born of your sons you shall give to me.<sup>6</sup>

In another instance they were discouraged; the first born could be redeemed by substituting an animal in their stead.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.<sup>7</sup>

In the Jewish law, it was the Levites who were set apart to be the substitutes. In this case it was assumed that the sacrifice would be one of dedication.

And the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every first born that opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, for all the first born are mine.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Genesis 28:16, 18, 19a, and 22a.

<sup>6</sup>Exodus 22:29.

<sup>7</sup>Genesis 22:13.

<sup>8</sup>Numbers 3:11, 12 and 13a.



Although there was a distaste for child sacrifices, Ahaz, confronted with an urgent, critical situation and wondering whether or not his sacrifices were effective, sacrificed his son.

He (Ahaz) even burned his son as an offering, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

Exceptions there were, but through popular distaste and prophetical denunciation the practice of child sacrifice became a thing of the past.

Man occupied an absolutely special position, nature was only an instrument to him, and the life of an Israelite man was precious in Jahweh's eyes. Therefore the sacrifice of children became both foolish and revolting.<sup>10</sup>

W. O. E. Oesterley in Sacrifices in Ancient Israel divides the sacrifices into three categories: gift, communion, and the renewal of life. All the offerings theoretically were gifts and there were various underlying motives for making them. But in general, each of the sacrifices could be classified under one of the three headings. The gift sacrifice was made out of gratitude for something already received or out of a desire for something to come. The communion sacrifice was a fellowship meal. It could be shared with other persons but God was always included. The third type was for the benefit of God alone. David's pouring out of the water which had been obtained at the risk of his men's lives is considered to be in this category.

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings 16:3b.

<sup>10</sup> Pedersen, Israel, p. 320.



But he would not drink of it; he poured it out to the Lord, and said, 'Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?'<sup>11</sup>

Johs. Pedersen, in Israel III and IV considers the "renewal of life" as the basic principle behind sacrifices. Gift and communion sacrifices are considered as general types along with burnt offerings, sin offerings, free will offerings, etc. To sacrifice was necessary to preserve the life of Israel. By it, the world of the Israelite was sanctified; the Israelite himself was made holy; the covenant with God strengthened as was God himself. All life according to Pedersen was renewed.

To effect this renewal the offering was made to Jahweh primarily as a gift. Other features might have entered into the idea but this predominated. The gifts which became designated as holy things were not limited to animals or to agricultural products. The spoils of war were often dedicated to Jahweh.

From spoil won in battles they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of the house of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>

Precious metals also formed part of the temples treasury of holy things.

. . . and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine,<sup>13</sup> and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts.

<sup>11</sup>2 Samuel 23:16b, 17a.

<sup>12</sup>1 Chronicles 26:27.

<sup>13</sup>Haggai 2:7 and 8.



The occasions for making a sacrifice went beyond the two basic ones of the first-fruits and first-born. All that was needed to make a sacrifice was the desire. If one had been specially blessed and felt grateful there was an opportunity for him to make a free will offering. If the blessing had been specially asked for and the asker had made a conditional promise the sacrifice was referred as a votive one. The offering in each case took the form of a sacrificial meal. In the sharing of the offering with the deity, there was a certain degree of communion involved. Just as a fellowship meal served to strengthen the relationship between friends, so too, these sacrifices strengthened the relationship between God and those who took part and because of this they were given the special name of peace offerings.

And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which one may offer to the Lord. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thankoffering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well mixed with oil. With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with cakes of leavened bread. And of such he shall offer one cake from each offering, as an offering to the Lord: it shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until the morning. But if the sacrifice of his offering is a votive offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the say that he offers his sacrifice, and on the morrow what remains of it shall be eaten, but what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire.<sup>14</sup>

The procedure for making the offering was rather simple. The worshippers first sanctified themselves. The animal was offered. The

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<sup>14</sup>Leviticus 7:11-17.



blood because of its holy quality was poured out on the holy place, i.e. the stone or altar and in this way given to God. In some cases the fat of the entrails and the kidneys was also offered to God by being burnt on the stone. The partakers then ate the remaining portions.

The most noteworthy of the peace offerings was on the occasion of the making of the covenant with God and the people of Israel at Sinai. The event is described in the book of Exodus, chapters 19-24. The mountain was set apart as holy. The people were consecrated (19:24). Moses recited the demands of God which were agreed to by the people (24:3). He built an altar at which the burnt offerings and peace offerings were sacrificed. The blood was collected. Half of this Moses threw against the altar, the remaining half he threw on the people with the words, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." (24:8b) The action together with the words sealed the covenant.

As other significant events occurred, similar sacrifices were made. The choice of a king:

So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.<sup>15</sup>

The building of a wall:

Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace.'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> 1 Samuel 11:15.

<sup>16</sup> Nehemiah 2:18.



And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgiving, and with singing, with cymbals, harps and lyres. . . . and they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced.<sup>17</sup>

The dedication of a temple:

Then the king and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the Lord. . . . So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

The variety of gifts that could be offered and the numerous occasions when a sacrifice could be made brought about a change in emphasis. The sanctification of the world of nature idea dropped into the background; what was important now was that the sacrifice could strengthen the covenant relationship. If the life of Israel depended upon this relationship then it was not too long before regular daily sacrifices became a requirement. The development of the priesthood according to Pedersen came as a result of the increase in the number of sacrifices and with the development came the various regulations concerning them.

The importance of the blood, for example, was shown by the care that was taken in its handling. The life or soul of an animal was present in the blood and when the animal was killed, the blood had to be returned to its source, i.e. to God.

<sup>17</sup> Nehemiah 12:27 and 43.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Kings 8:62 and 63b.



Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.<sup>19</sup>

When efforts were made to limit the sacrifices to the temple at Jerusalem, a distinction was made between slaughter and sacrifice. If an animal was slaughtered there would be nothing wrong in pouring the blood upon the ground.

Take heed that you do not offer your burnt offerings at every place that you see; but at the place which the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall do all that I am commanding you. However, you may slaughter and eat flesh within any of your towns, as much as you desire, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which he has given you; the clean and the unclean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the hart. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water.<sup>20</sup>

The partaking of the blood or any part of the offering that belonged to Jahweh was made a punishable offense.

For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which an offering by fire is made to the Lord shall be cut off from his people. Moreover you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwellings. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.<sup>21</sup>

To further emphasize the importance of not consuming the blood, the prohibition was referred back to the covenant of God with Noah.

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Deuteronomy 12:23.

<sup>20</sup> Deuteronomy 12:13-16.

<sup>21</sup> Leviticus 7:25-27.

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 9:3 and 4.



Prior to the exile, the use of the blood for atonement purposes was quite common.

Then he brought the bull of the sin offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull of the sin offering. And Moses killed it, and took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar round about, and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar, and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.<sup>23</sup>

If the prescribed rules were carefully carried out, the outpouring of the blood would cover or remove the sin of the worshipper. Just why this should be the case was not explicitly mentioned. Oesterley feels that the explanation is hinted at in the Levitical pronouncement:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life.<sup>24</sup>

The idea was presumably, that in the outpouring of one life another life was preserved.

In the post-exilic period the idea of atonement predominated. With this emphasis on the atonement, the blood took on an increased importance as the core of the whole ritual to remove sin. In the ritual, a ram and two goats were used. The ram was presented as a sin offering for the priest and his house; one goat as a sin offering for the people. The relatively new idea was the use made of the second goat.

And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the

<sup>23</sup>Leviticus 8:14 and 15.

<sup>24</sup>Leviticus 17:11.



live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of the man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.<sup>25</sup>

The transference of the sins of the people to a "scapegoat" was part of an ancient rite and adapted, according to Oesterley, to the worship of Jahweh. Whether or not this idea of transference was part of the blood ritual or just a later addition to it was not clarified, but the two ideas were to be involved in the interpretation of the crucifixion. Both of these can be discerned in the Suffering Servant chapter of Isaiah.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.<sup>26</sup>

Where the portion of the offering made to Jahweh could not be absorbed as were the blood, wine or oil, the holy parts had to be disposed of by other means. Burning was the logical method and hence the fat and the kidneys formed part of the burnt offering. Burning presented an additional complication in that it was possible for the offering not to burn or at best just smolder. In the setting of a sacrifice, this could only mean one thing--the offering was either acceptable or it was not. An indication of whether or not the offering was accepted

<sup>25</sup> Leviticus 16:20-22.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 53:12.



was the presence of smoke.

I will offer to thee burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats.<sup>27</sup>

Later, when the smoke came to be regarded as having a significance of its own, incense was added to make the smoke smell "sweeter" and make the sacrifice more acceptable. Still later, its use was restricted by the priests to special occasions only.

And the incense which you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves; it shall be for you holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people.<sup>28</sup>

The practice of burnt offerings meant that an abundance of sacrifices could be made. The insecurity of Israel just prior to the exile resulted in an increased desire to gain Jahweh's favour. If one sacrifice pleased Jahweh, two would please him even more. As the insecurity grew, so did the number of sacrifices. Efforts of the prophets to counteract the emphasis on quantity were by and large ignored.

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
He has showed you, O man, what is good; what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 66:15.

<sup>28</sup> Exodus 30:37 and 38.

<sup>29</sup> Micah 6:6-8.



Other ideas crept in which tended to corrupt the purpose of sacrifice. References in the prophetical writings give the indication that the prophets were against the whole sacrificial system. To them it seemed as if the cult had become an end in itself. Jeremiah in one violent outburst, predicted the destruction of the temple and with it the sacrifices themselves.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the Lord. Go now to my place which is in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.<sup>30</sup>

Other prophets were just as strong in their denunciation.

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.<sup>31</sup>

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Jeremiah 7:11-14.

<sup>31</sup> Amos 5:21-24.

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 1:11.



Strong as the condemnation was, Oesterley presents a strong argument that what was condemned was the corruption in the sacrifices rather than the sacrifices themselves. He feels that the prophets still had respect for the system. Isaiah's conversion experience took place in the temple. Amos' use of "your" indicated a wrong way of making the sacrifices. For Hosea, the sacrifice should have brought a closer relationship with God. That the people were unable to offer them properly was looked upon by Hosea as a punishment.

With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord,  
but they shall not find him; he has withdrawn from them.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to Jeremiah, Oesterley feels that he was the only prophet who did believe that the sacrificial system was inadequate and should be abolished.

Consumed with an overpowering thirst for righteousness, horrified at the gross sinfulness of those he saw about him, aghast at the idea widely held that immortality of life was consistent with sacrificial worship, and being himself of a somewhat impetuous and fanatical nature, Jeremiah gave way to the utterance of unbalanced words, which, in calmer moments, he would have repudiated. Such a true and sincere man would have been the last to claim impeccability.<sup>34</sup>

After the exile, it was quite natural that the emphasis of the sacrifices should be on atonement. Israel must have sinned greatly to have had such a calamity fall upon her and the offerings were now to be made to affect a reconciliation with Jahweh. The people agreed to pay a tax to the temple in order that the necessary sacrifices would be carried out.

<sup>33</sup>Hosea 5:6.

<sup>34</sup>W.O.E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, p. 207.



We also lay upon ourselves the obligation to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread, the continual cereal offering, the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.<sup>35</sup>

The view which the people held at this time is explained by Pedersen. With the sacrifice, there was a renewal of harmony. If the worshipper had offended Jahweh, the sacrifice had the double effect of purifying the person and persuading Jahweh to be lenient towards him. The offering removed the sin, and that, from God's standpoint, would be forgiveness. Though it was not uncommon for an intermediary to try to restore the broken relationship, God was the one who brought about the atonement.

I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgave you all that you have done, says the Lord God.<sup>36</sup>

The restoring of a broken relationship between man and God was referred to as propitiation. When the sanctuary had been cleansed of anything unclean it was said to have been purified or expiated. A slightly different interpretation is given by Ludwig Koehler in Old Testament Theology. Expiation according to him is "an act representing compensation for the failure to give due acknowledgement to the offended party."<sup>37</sup> David's offering of the seven sons of Saul to

<sup>35</sup> Nehemiah 10:32 and 33.

<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel 16:62 and 63.

<sup>37</sup> Ludwig Koehler, Old Testament Theology, p. 212.



offset the latter's offense against the Gibeonites was an expiation.

Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the face of the Lord. And the Lord said, 'There is guilt on Saul and on his house because he put the Gibeonites to death.' So the king called the Gibeonites. Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had sought to slay them in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah. And David said to the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? And how shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the Lord?'<sup>38</sup>

In this case there was no attempt made to reconcile the two parties; it was just a matter of removing the cause of the disturbance. This purifying or expiating effect of sacrifice became the most important aspect. As the people became more conscious of sin and its damaging effects, the more they tended to forget about the blessings of God. They concentrated, instead, on how to avoid the curse of wronging him. The emphasis was on the wrong committed and how to get rid of it rather than on the restoration of a broken fellowship.

The temple was the logical place to satisfy this desire for righteousness. A sacrifice was carefully prescribed for any infraction and the desired expiation could be obtained with its proper observance. In time the ritual associated with each sacrifice became quite detailed and elaborate; the correct performance of which became a necessity. The importance of the temple grew with the desire for holiness but the unfortunate part was the one-sided emphasis on evil.

For the majority of the people, the idea of offering numerous sacrifices seemed to suffice. A few tired of the attempts to become

<sup>38</sup>2 Samuel 21:1-3.



righteous and looked for a better answer. The Dispersion, in spite of all its hardship, had produced the thought that perhaps the relationship with God was not dependent upon the number of sacrifices that were made. Instead of numerous offerings, the idea was that God preferred a right behaviour.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.<sup>39</sup>

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.<sup>40</sup>

Another insight that was gained was that God acted independently of any sacrifice. His forgiveness was freely offered and was not conditional upon any offering that was made.

Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honoured me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense.

You have not brought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.

But you have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities.

I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,<sup>41</sup> and I will not remember your sins.

If a sacrifice were required, then God himself would provide it. His offering would replace the futile efforts of the people and would point to something above and beyond the sacrificial practice.

<sup>39</sup> Psalm 51:15-17.

<sup>40</sup> Hosea 6:6.

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah 43:22-25.



Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;  
 yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.  
 But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
 he was bruised for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
 and with his stripes we are healed.  
 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
 we have turned every one to his own way;  
 And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.  
 Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him;  
 he has put him to grief;  
 when he makes himself an offering for sin,  
 he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days;  
 the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;  
 he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul  
 and be satisfied,  
 by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
 make many to be accounted righteous;  
 and he shall bear their iniquities.<sup>42</sup>

In conclusion, Israel had come a long way in her attitude towards sacrifices. Whether they were made as an expression of gratitude, a desire for communion or to bring about an expiation of sin, they were all made in an effort to maintain the covenant relationship with Israel's God. Although her neighbors sacrificed to their own gods for much the same reasons, Israel's sacrifices were always influenced by the ethical code she had accepted at Sinai. The visible offerings, for example, were never allowed to interfere with the commandment of having no graven images. The stress on perfection, both in the observance of the sacrifice and in the offering itself, could be criticised, but it was done in an effort to prevent anything from interfering with their desire for holiness.

The calamities which periodically befell Israel brought about

<sup>42</sup> Isaiah 53:4-6, 10 and 11.



a gradual divergence in opinion. The offerings to express gratitude and communion were still acceptable. The difference in opinion came as to the best way of removing the barriers caused by sin. Some felt that in order to maintain the relationship more sacrifices were required. Others felt that Jahweh wanted something different. Instead of offering animals to make up for wrong, these persons felt that Jahweh preferred the offering of themselves. God was primarily interested in them. What the people gave, he accepted if it came as an expression of their own dedication.

The prophets of this latter position paved the way for the coming of Jesus. But it was the experiences of this people of Israel, their failures and their successes, that enabled the prophets to gain this insight. Without the history of this people who first sacrificed in the desert, the sacrifice of Christ might have had no more meaning than a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."



## CHAPTER III

### THE JEWISH PASSOVER

One of the more significant of Jewish festivals is the Passover. Each time the feast is observed, the Jewish nation re-lives the account of its deliverance from Egypt and in no small way draws from the observance a renewed sanctification. The Christian communion service owes much of its significance to this feast. Though the relationship is not too clearly defined, the commemoration and the rededication which are essential elements of both have intertwined the two. A full discussion of the Lord's Supper, therefore, cannot be adequately presented without a study of the Jewish Passover. It is the writer's intention to examine this feast so that its relationship with the communion service may be better understood.

The feast of the Passover has its basis in the account from the book of Exodus. Various changes are noticed in later accounts, but for the present this one will suffice.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month take every man a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household; and if the household is too small for a lamb, then a man and his neighbor next to his house shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old; you shall take it from the



sheep of from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs in the evening. Then they shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat them. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled with water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning, anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall keep it as an ordinance forever. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly; no work shall be done on those days; but what every one must eat, that only may be prepared by you. And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your host out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations as an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening you shall eat unleavened bread, and so until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for if anyone eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.<sup>1</sup>

The main points of the feast according to Johs. Pedersen in Israel, Its Life and Culture, III and IV, are:

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12:1-20.



1. On the tenth day of the month, every Israelite family was to select a male animal without blemish from among the lambs or kids.

2. The lamb was killed on the evening of the fourteenth to start the feast.

3. The blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on the posts and lintels of the house. The motive here was to protect the Israelites from the forthcoming destruction.

4. The meat was to be roasted and eaten. Any leftovers were to be burnt by morning.

5. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were to be eaten as well.

6. The meal was to be a hurried one; the participants were to eat with staves in hand ready for a journey.

7. On the remaining days, unleavened bread alone was to be eaten. Any leaven was to be disposed of prior to the feast.

From this account in Exodus, it would mean that the family was the central point. The family killed the lamb; it ate the meal; the blood was sprinkled to protect it; the family spent the whole week together. The feast was to be celebrated by all Israel, yet the celebration itself was a family affair.

The Passover feast originally was two separate feasts. Although there is no distinct proof for this, the assumption can be made on the basis of several references. Prior to their departure from Egypt, the Israelites asked permission to go into the desert to make sacrifices to their God. The request was made on the basis of a long-standing tradition and the resulting struggle to leave heightened the significance of the sacrifice. The typical offering of a wandering tribe of this



period consisted of a lamb or a kid. It was generally made in the spring when the young were born. The purpose of the offering was to sanctify the flocks. Because of the predominance of the first-born idea in the passover account, i.e. the saving of the Israelites' first-born and the killing of the first-born of the Egyptians, it is possible that it was the first-born of the flocks that were sacrificed. The well-being of the flock depended upon the condition of the offering so care was exercised in its preparation. It was not to be boiled, nor eaten raw, but roasted whole with no bones broken in the process.

The eating of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs might have been a carry over along with the sacrifice and given a special interpretation because of the Exodus. The origin of the bitter herbs is uncertain but there is a hint that the eating of the unleavened bread might have been separate from the feast at one time.

When the people of Israel were encamped in Gilgal they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. And on the morrow after the passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased on the morrow, when they ate of the produce of the land; and the people of Israel had manna no more, but ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.<sup>2</sup>

Manna was the food they ate in the desert, whereas the unleavened bread (Massoth) was not used until after the immigration. The eating of the unleavened bread forms such a significant part of the feast that it would be better to assume that this was a distinct feast of its own--a festival of the barley harvest. This festival also observed in the

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua 5:10-12.



spring was to sanctify the first produce of the soil. The bread was to be eaten uncontaminated by any foreign elements hence unleavened. Because both of these feasts were observed in the spring a combination of the two was inevitable. The events of the Exodus provided a new meaning for the whole feast--it was now a commemoration of deliverance.

The Passover account is more of dramatic legend than pure history. The historical events in the account were colored by the idea that Jahweh was in control. The outcome was never in doubt. Moses was called out of the desert. He and Aaron were to be the spokesmen before the Pharaoh. The uneven conflict was indicated in Jahweh's having to harden the Pharaoh's heart. The climax of the conflict was reached with the Israelites safe out of Egypt and the Pharaoh's men drowned. The Exodus and the separate festivals were fused into a single entity; the Israelites in Canaan became a nation under Jahweh "the God who brought them out of Egypt." Each observance of the feast gave the tiny nation added confidence and helped to solidify them as a people.

As time went on, several changes were to appear in the feast. References made at several points throughout the Old Testament indicate that the characteristic features of the Passover were altered somewhat. From the account in the book of Deuteronomy, there are several differences to be noted.

1. The feast was to be celebrated in Jerusalem (at the place which the Lord your God shall choose), (16:6a) i.e. it was to be a national feast rather than simply a family one.

2. In the morning the people were to return to their tents (16:7).



3. The victim was not specified other than being from the flocks or herd (16:2).

4. The sacrifice was to be boiled (16:7a).

Another reference considers the festival as two distinct feasts.

These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of the unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.<sup>3</sup>

Here, the two feasts follow one another, yet they are distinct from each other. The description of the feast in the book of Numbers is different again. The sacrifice of not one animal but of several is the keynote (28:19). An offering was to be made each day of the feast (28:24). The emphasis on the offering left the eating of the unleavened bread in the background. In the reference in the second book of Kings, (23:21-23) no details are given but it may be assumed that Josiah followed the outline given in Deuteronomy. In the second book of Chronicles the above reference was expanded somewhat (35:1-19). Here, the priests and the Levites were the central figures. The king and his chiefs contributed the victims numbering in the thousands, but it was the priests who sprinkled the blood on the altar. The offering was then divided amongst the families present. In an earlier account (chapter 30), the Levites did the slaughtering because there were many who had not sanctified themselves.

The feast had been gradually transformed from a family affair into a temple one where the family's sole responsibility was the

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<sup>3</sup>Leviticus 23:4-6.



eating of the victim. In post exilic Israel, the temple officers had complete control over the feast, the people were only the recipients of what the Levites offered them.

On the fourteenth day of the first month the returned exiles kept the passover. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they killed the passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves; it was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the pollutions of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. And they kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Towards the end of the pre-Christian era, the feast underwent a further change in that the Passover was again connected with the home.

And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover lamb, his disciples said to him, 'Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the passover?' And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the householder, 'The teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.'<sup>5</sup>

That there was a certain difficulty in maintaining a distinction between the family and the public aspects of the feast can be concluded from the above discussion. The method of observing the

<sup>4</sup> Ezra 6:19-22.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 14:12-15.



feast seemed to be in constant flux as well. The method itself was later regulated by the Mishnah. The details were outlined quite meticulously. An example of the rather extreme legislation is quoted below.

If the limb (of a Passover offering) projected outside (the wall of Jerusalem) it must be cut away until the bone is reached, and the flesh then pared off until the joint is reached, and then it may be chopped off with a chopper, since they do not come under the rule of 'the breaking of a bone'. From the jamb of the door inwards counts as inside, and from the jamb of the door outwards counts as outside; the windows and the thickness of the wall count as inside (Pesahim 7.12).<sup>6</sup>

Yet, in spite of the above legalism and the uncertainty of the correct Old Testament position, the importance of the feast was never in doubt as far as Israel was concerned.

Rabban Gamaliel used to say: whosoever has not said these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, unleavened bread and bitter herbs: The Passover because God passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt; the unleavened bread because they were redeemed; bitter herbs because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt. . . . Therefore are we bound to give thanks to, to praise, to laud, to glorify, to exalt and to magnify him who wrought for us and our fathers all these miracles. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a festival day, and from servitude to redemption; so let us say before him the Hallelujah (Pesahim 10.5).<sup>7</sup>

The modern day celebration of the Passover differs slightly from those already described. The time of observance is still the same. On the evening of the thirteenth of Nisan, a thorough search

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Danby, The Mishnah, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 150.



of the house is made for any leaven. The following day, the leaven is burnt. The first-born son of every family fasts (if he is over thirteen) until he has attended a special service at the Synagogue. Following the service a home ceremony termed the Seder is held. The Seder-dish containing a shank bone of lamb (the Matzoh) and a roasted egg is placed in front of the head of the family. The shank represents the Paschal Lamb; the roast egg the free-will offering. Bitter herbs such as parsley and horseradish, a fruit sop and wine complete the table.

A prayer of sanctification is made (the Passover Kiddush). The wine is drunk and a ritual washing of the hands is performed. The Seder-dish is then blessed. The "Magged" follows. The youngest son asks his father the four questions, "Why this night above all nights we eat unleavened bread, bitter herbs dipped in salt water, and charoseth (the fruit sop), and in a reclining position?" The father then relates the account of the Passover. Part of the "Hallel" (Psalm 113 and 114) is recited and a second cup of wine consumed. For the meal proper, the hands are again washed and a blessing said. The bitter herbs are dipped in the sop then placed between two pieces of Matzoh and eaten. A third cup of wine is drunk in a reclining position. The remainder of the "Hallel" is recited and a fourth cup of wine drunk. The ceremony concludes with some Hebrew songs. The same procedure is repeated each evening of the feast.

For the Jewish people the procedure is important, of course, but the emphasis is on the celebration itself. It does not seem to matter how many changes or adaptations were made in the form, the



significant thing for them is that each observance is a promise of freedom.

The spirit of the Passover is one of liberty. A nation of slaves in Egypt saw at this time of the year, the first rays of liberty dawning upon them and the foundation laid for a glorious future struggle for the loftiest principles and ideas of humanity. Upon these principles of love and equity, upon these ideals of eternal truth, justice and righteousness, the Jewish nation has staked its right to existence. And it was to further defend, promote and finally help carry these principles and ideals to their glorious consummation, that Israel so doggedly and boldly has fought and faced the vicissitudes of desert life as well as the untold miseries of the "Golus", the constant hostility, persecutions and assaults of the rest of the world. Thus Passover--Spring-time come over and over again to Israel with new inspiration and great determination to perform the work begun with the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, to accomplish the task set to help bring about 'Malchuth Shomayim', the 'Kingdom of God on Earth'.<sup>8</sup>

The Samaritan observance of the Passover follows even more closely the procedure outlined in the Pentateuch. Their temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed in 128 B.C., but they have retained access to a small plot of ground closeby. There, the only surviving Samaritan community which is located at Nablous gathers each year to celebrate the feast.

Two festivals which under the influence of the dramatic events of the Exodus were combined into one. The two spring festivals, one an agricultural feast (unleavened bread) and the second a pastoral feast (offering of the first-born), were given a new meaning. What had been merely spring festivals in honour of a god with which the people had some remote connection, now became one national feast in

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<sup>8</sup> H. Silverstone, Jewish Holydays and Minor Holidays and Fasts, p. 31.



commemoration of an act of redemption at the hands of Jahweh, a God whom they knew to be their own.

Communal feasts such as this often degenerate after a period of time into an individualistic celebration. Thanksgiving Day is an example of such an occurrence. The Passover, meanwhile, has retained its national significance portraying as it does a mature religious expression of a peoples' faith. At a time when any outward expression of piety, especially on a national scale, is looked upon with a degree of embarrassment, the importance of the Passover cannot be overestimated.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE LAST SUPPER

The same night in which he was betrayed, Jesus and his disciples met in an upper room to partake of a meal. At that meal, the bread was broken and the cup of wine passed around.

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."<sup>1</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."<sup>1</sup>

The accounts in Matthew and Luke are similar, as is the account of Paul's in the first letter to the Corinthians.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."<sup>2</sup>

The meal is also referred to in the Gospel of John. The bread and the wine are not mentioned directly, the emphasis, instead, is on a series of discourses.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 14:22-24.

<sup>2</sup>1 Corinthians 11:23-25.



Each of the synoptic gospels refers to the supper as the observance of the passover.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the passover?'<sup>3</sup>

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they had sacrificed the passover lamb, his disciples said to him, 'Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the passover?'<sup>4</sup>

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the passover for us, that we may eat it.'<sup>5</sup>

Paul's account of the last supper makes no mention of the passover.

Were the above references the only ones available, then we would have to conclude that the last supper observed by Jesus and his disciples was in effect the feast of the passover. If the whole account of the crucifixion is taken into consideration, however, several points arise which would cast doubt on the above conclusion.

If the meal took place on Friday, just prior to sundown when the passover feast was commonly celebrated, then the activities leading up to the crucifixion and the crucifixion itself would have had to have taken place on the Sabbath. If this were the case, then several of the events which happened would have been in strict violation of this holy day, e.g. the holding of the court by the Sanhedrin.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 26:17.

<sup>4</sup>Mark 14:12.

<sup>5</sup>Luke 22:7 and 8.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 22:66.



The carrying of weapons by the disciples.<sup>7</sup> The bazaar was open to sell Joseph an article of clothing.<sup>8</sup> George Buchanan Gray in Sacrifice in the Old Testament mentions three features of the last supper which differed from a strict celebration of the passover.

1. There was no mention of the roasted Paschal flesh.
2. The word for bread corresponds to the Hebrew "lechem", i.e. the bread used for ordinary meals rather than "mazzoth", the unleavened bread.
3. One cup was used in the last supper narratives whereas in the passover feast there was one cup for each person.

The points presented above do not confirm that the meal was not the passover, but they would have to be considered along with the rest of the argument.

The Gospel of John differs somewhat from the accounts in the synoptic gospels in that the last supper is moved ahead twenty-four hours, i.e. from just prior to sunset on Friday to just prior to sunset on Thursday.

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was early. They themselves did not enter the praetorium,<sup>9</sup> so that they might not be defiled, but eat the passover.

Now it was the day of the Preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!',<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Matthew 26:51.

<sup>8</sup>Mark 15:46.

<sup>9</sup>John 18:28.

<sup>10</sup>John 19:14.



Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.<sup>11</sup>

According to John then, the last supper took place on the eve of the day of Preparation. W.O.E. Oesterley, in The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy, used the account to make the following observations regarding the chronology of those few days.

Nisan 14, i.e. 6 p.m. on Thursday to 6 p.m. on Friday, was the day of the Preparation on which the Passover lambs were sacrificed. This was the day of the Crucifixion. Therefore the last supper took place on the eve of the feast; for the day of Preparation, while not regarded as the first day of the feast, nevertheless inaugurated it.

Nisan 15, i.e. 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 p.m. on Saturday, was the first day of the Passover on which the Passover meal took place. In this year the Sabbath coincided with the first day of the Passover; but according to Jewish custom a feast took precedence of the sabbath on such occasions.

Nisan 16, i.e. 6 p.m. on Saturday to 6 p.m. on Sunday, was the second day of the Passover; it was also the first day of the week; the day of the Resurrection, for it was the 'third day' from the Crucifixion.<sup>12</sup>

If the last supper was not the feast of the Passover, then the question arises as to what it might have been. According to Oesterley, there is evidence in favour of the feast being a simple fellowship meal. It was the custom among Jews at the time for friends to meet together weekly for a religious discussion and a social meal. The group, termed Chabûrâth (having to do with friendship), usually met early on Friday afternoons when they would converse and eat till dusk.

<sup>11</sup> John 19:14.

<sup>12</sup> W.O.E. Oesterley, The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy, p. 160.



At that time the sabbath sanctification was performed by having the presiding member take a cup of wine and say a short prayer over it.

The meal and sanctification ceremony was a household one at first. During the early Christian era both became associated with the synagogue where in time the meal was dropped, and the ceremony became referred to as the "Kiddush" or simply "Sanctification". The following is a typical present day sanctification.

### Kiddush for Sabbath Evening<sup>13</sup>

And it was evening and it was morning, - the sixth day.

And the heaven and the earth were finished and all their host. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and he hallowed it, because he rested there on from all his work which God had created and made.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by thy commandments and hast taken pleasure in us, and in love and favour hast given us thy holy sabbath as an inheritance, a memorial of the creation--that day being also the first of the holy convocations, in remembrance of the departure from Egypt. For thou hast chosen us and sanctified us above all nations, and in love and favour hast given us thy holy Sabbath as an inheritance. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hallowest the Sabbath.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth.

Thus the disciples gathered together with Jesus as they had probably done many times previously for their usual fellowship meal.

<sup>13</sup> The Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire, p. 124.



Because of the passover preparations taking place on the Friday, the meal was held a day earlier. The usual grace was said; those present began to eat and as was the custom, the topic of conversation was religious in character. The essence of the discourse in this case is preserved in the latter portions of the Gospel of John. Towards dusk, Jesus took the bread and the wine and blessed them in turn according to the specific "Kiddush" for the day. The discourses, the blessing, the partaking of the bread and the wine, indeed the whole occasion was hallowed by the events which followed.

Another theory is that presented by Sherman E. Johnson in the exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew in the Interpreter's Bible. The most probable theory according to him was that the last supper was a solemn banquet celebrated by a religious brotherhood. The "Kiddush" theory he rejects because of the lack of evidence that the Jews held such meals on the night prior to the Passover. The second argument could be gone into further, but Frederick G. Grant in the exegesis of the Gospel of Mark in the same volume prefers the same argument presented by Oesterley as above.

In spite of the argument in favour of the Last Supper being a simple fellowship meal rather than the passover feast, there is still the question of why the writers in the New Testament continually referred to the meal in terms of the passover. They certainly were not ignorant of the details or of the discrepancies which have been pointed out above. It is the feeling of Oesterley that the writers reflected the popular opinion of the day rather than trying to be chronologically correct. The association of the crucifixion with the slaying of the



Paschal lamb; "for Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed"<sup>14</sup> produced a passover atmosphere and this according to Oesterley:

. . . being all so familiar to the disciples and to the generation of Jewish Christians that followed, was it not the natural thing in the world that they, in thinking of Christ, and of his redemptive work, and of the memorial of Him, should have connected all these with the Passover. . . and have thought of the Last Supper as a Passover meal rather than of its connection with Kiddush?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:7b.

<sup>15</sup> Oesterley, The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy, p. 176.



## CHAPTER V

### SACRIFICE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Jewish sacrificial system reached its peak shortly after the exile. By the time of Christ, the system was a well-regulated one covering as it did a multitude of purposes. Of particular importance was the shedding of blood. Not only was it used as a means of atonement, it was poured out as a gift, it was offered as the Lord's share of a feast, it was shed as a means of liberating life.

It was into this setting that Jesus was born. His attitude towards the established tradition was one of acceptance. He took it for granted.

He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?'<sup>1</sup>

And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 12:3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:43 and 44.



His desire to observe the passover was an indication of his willingness to abide by the traditions of his people.

Now on the first day of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?'<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' break with the past was at the point of motives. What was important in his eyes was why a person observed the various sacrifices.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.<sup>4</sup>

Though he respected the tradition, Jesus was constantly emphasizing an attitude beyond the limited effectiveness of the sacrifice.

Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'<sup>5</sup>

And the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.'<sup>6</sup>

At one point his objection to the spirit of sacrifice flared into anger and a few money changers went scampering.

And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 26:17.

<sup>4</sup>Matthew 5:23 and 24.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 9:13.

<sup>6</sup>Mark 12:32-34.



He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you made it a den of robbers.'<sup>7</sup>

Yet, his desire was not to overthrow the tradition but to realize it.

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.<sup>8</sup>

This fulfillment was realized on the cross. W.O.E. Oesterley in Sacrifices in Ancient Israel has outlined four steps in this realization.

1. The existence of sin and its remedy was recognized.

Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.'<sup>9</sup>

2. The person was to offer his life to God.

And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'<sup>10</sup>

3. The goal of discipleship was union with God through Christ.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'<sup>11</sup>

4. In order for life to be received, it had to be surrendered.

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Matthew 21:12 and 13.

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 5:17.

<sup>9</sup>Mark 2:9-11.

<sup>10</sup>Mark 8:34.

<sup>11</sup>Mark 14:23 and 24.

<sup>12</sup>Matthew 10:39.



For Christ, then, the cross signified the end of his work on earth which had commenced with the Incarnation. The whole of his life and work was offered as a sacrifice, an offering made in complete obedience to the will of his Father. The resurrection was God's acceptance of the sacrifice so made. Christ was no longer the obedient servant but the exalted Lord.

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>13</sup>

The reconciliation spoken of by Paul was accomplished.

All this from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>14</sup>

Christ died on behalf of the people and by so doing liberated them from the power of sin.

. . . since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.<sup>15</sup>

In order to benefit in the redeeming power it was necessary to become part of this redeeming fellowship--the body of Christ--the Church.

<sup>13</sup>Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>14</sup>Corinthians 5:19.

<sup>15</sup>Romans 3:23-25.



The church which was already part of the age to come was to carry on the work of redemption and to await the final revelation of its Lord.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.  
So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and the Lord's Supper has been subject to many interpretations. Because of the many sacrificial references made in the New Testament, the whole of Christ's life and work has been regarded as a sacrifice.

For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>17</sup>

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'<sup>18</sup>

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.<sup>19</sup>

. . . saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.'<sup>20</sup>

This, along with the phrases used in the Last Supper itself--given for you, shed for you, has led scholars to interpret the Lord's Supper in sacrificial terms. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage about 250 A.D. had this to say about the Eucharist:

<sup>16</sup> Romans 5:17 and 20.

<sup>17</sup> Mark 10:45.

<sup>18</sup> John 1:35 and 36.

<sup>19</sup> Galatians 3:13.

<sup>20</sup> Revelations 5:12



If Christ Jesus our Lord and God is himself the high priest of God the Father and first offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father, and commanded this to be done in remembrance of himself, then assuredly the priest acts truly in Christ's room, when he imitates what Christ did, and he offers then a true and complete sacrifice to God the Father, if he so began to offer as he sees Christ himself has offered.<sup>21</sup>

The idea that Christ could be offered anew as a sacrifice in the mass was quite unacceptable to Luther.

Another scandal must be removed. . .namely the general belief that the mass is a sacrifice which is offered to God. The offering of a sacrifice is incompatible with the distribution of a testament or the reception of a promise.<sup>22</sup>

Luther's objection which was later amplified in his treatise Benefits of the Lord's Supper, was not the idea of sacrifice itself but the idea that the mass could be used as an offering to secure God's grace.

Now, if the Papists try their sophistry upon my words as their custom is, and rejoin that I myself consider the Sacrament a sacrifice in spite of my contention that it is not, you shall make this reply: 'I consider neither the mass nor the Sacrament a sacrifice. But the remembrance of Christ, namely, the faith and testimony concerning the grace of God which bars out our own merit and work--that is a sacrifice. It is a thank-offering; by such remembrance of Christ we confess with gratitude that our redemption, our righteousness and salvation stand together in grace and in the suffering of Christ.'<sup>23</sup>

Let it be noted, they do not treat the body and blood of Christ as an offering of thanks, but an offering of works. They do not make the Sacrament an occasion for rendering thanks to God for mercy received, but for meriting and securing that mercy by celebrating it in behalf of themselves and others. Christ, then, has not secured grace

<sup>21</sup> Documents of the Christian Church, ed. Henry Bettenson, p. 108.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>23</sup> J. N. Lenker, Luther's Catechetical Writings, p. 356.



for us; we ourselves must secure it through our own works,  
by offering unto God the body and blood of his Son.<sup>24</sup>

• • • I have no objection whatever to the priests rendering thanks to God for us all in the mass so long as they do not deem that mass as special and different from the Sacrament of the laity, as if the latter could not and should not appropriate it with the same degree of gratitude.<sup>25</sup>

Though opposition to the idea of sacrifice is still voiced by many segments of the Christian Church, the general tendency is towards a sacrificial interpretation of the Lord's Supper; the sacrament being not so much an immediate sacrifice as a re-presentation of the original.

The idea of sacrifice cannot be dissociated from the Sacrament, for the memorial which our Lord commanded his disciples to make centers in the thought of his body given and his blood shed for the salvation of men. All Christians recognize Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the only and all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Where they differ is in their views concerning subjective aspects of sacrifice, and the manner and extent to which believers share in the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Gustav Aulén in Eucharist and Sacrifice has considered the evidence in the New Testament from this point of view. In order to clarify his position, Aulén considers two questions; first, the question of God's relationship to the sacrifice of Christ and second, the extent of the sacrifice so made.

The picture in the Bible is one depicting a struggle between God and the forces of evil. Man, created of the dust of the earth and

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>26</sup>Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 236.



endowed with the breath of life, is caught up in this conflict. The God who created and who sustains his creation is also active in its redemption. As the struggle continues, man gradually becomes aware of the nature of God until in the fulness of time God can reveal himself in his Son. The result of this is a victory over the powers of evil. The covenant whose implications were only partially grasped by Moses becomes a reality.

The relationship of God and Christ in the whole struggle might be seen without really involving the individual.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, the relationship between Christ and the individual might be seen in the sacrifice without really involving God.

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.<sup>28</sup>

To emphasize either side to the exclusion of the other would do an injustice to the New Testament concept which upheld that Christ in both his conflict and victory and his sacrifice was representing both God and man.

The relationship can be shown by a consideration of the sacrifice. Christ was born, i.e. he became flesh. He accepted the crucifixion as his Father's will.

<sup>27</sup> John 3:16 and 17.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Peter 1:18 and 19.



And he said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.'<sup>29</sup>

The sacrifice was accepted by God.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.<sup>30</sup>

There does not seem to be any question as to Christ's relationship with the individual and his offering of himself as a vicarious sacrifice.

God at this point though, might be regarded as a passive recipient whose sole function is either to accept or to reject the offering.

But the Gospel of John affirms that God sent his Son and that it was his will that Christ should be so offered. The activity of God was made even more direct when it was seen that God himself was crucified.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>31</sup>

Another question which has to be answered is the extent of the sacrifice, i.e. does the sacrifice of Christ have any meaning if applied to his life before or after the crucifixion? If the argument above is of any value then the whole of Christ's life and work on earth was an offering which was brought to a climax on Calvary.

. . . who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself,

<sup>29</sup>Mark 14:36.

<sup>30</sup>Philippians 2:9.

<sup>31</sup>2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19.



taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>32</sup>

If the concept of the Suffering Servant is used, then the idea of sacrifice is made even clearer. Though the concept itself is not necessarily a framework into which the life of Christ is fitted, it is one of the better comparisons of the role the Saviour was to take.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.<sup>33</sup>

As to the risen and glorified Christ, the New Testament idea is that he still performs a sacrifice--a continuous one in the sense that God is always active in this way. The sacrifice was made once, but it is eternally valid. The resurrection of Christ was God's acceptance of his sacrificial life and death. Christ is now the exalted Lord, yet he still lives in fellowship with those who make up his body. The unity of the body (the church) with the exalted Lord is not questioned. The Letter to the Hebrews which is more explicit about the idea of a continuous sacrifice is careful to emphasize the once and for all aspect of the sacrifice.

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of his people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Philippians 2:6-8.

<sup>33</sup>Isaiah 53:4 and 5.

<sup>34</sup>Hebrews 7:27.



. . . he entered once for all into the Holy Place taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.<sup>35</sup>

Along with this idea the author presents the concept of Christ as the eternal High Priest.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.<sup>36</sup>

The implication that Christ's sacrifice is repeated over and over again is avoided by a careful use of terms. The sacrifice of Christ as the suffering servant was to effect a reconciliation which offers redemption for all eternally. As the eternal high priest, the exalted Lord is able to offer this redemption at any time to anyone within the fellowship of his church. Therefore Christ's presence before God is as one who intercedes for those who he brings with him, i.e., his body. This whole concept of intercession is what the author implies in his idea of the continuous sacrifice of Christ.

The intercessory sacrifice rests on the foundation of the sacrifice of reconciliation. The intercessory sacrifice is not designed to create a new covenant, but to realize the covenant which has already been established. Through this intercession, the heavenly High Priest proclaims his solidarity with his church in all its wants and weakness. The purpose of his intercession is to release and actualize the powers of life which are contained in the atonement.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Hebrews 9:12.

<sup>36</sup> Hebrews 6:19 and 20.

<sup>37</sup> Gustav Aulén, Eucharist and Sacrifice, p. 153.



In order to obtain a better picture of the relationship of the sacrifice of Christ and the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament has to be considered as well. His presence is taken for granted in the New Testament, although it is the invisible Christ rather than the visible one who is present at the table. His return in visible form was looked forward to with anticipation. Hence Paul's words: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."<sup>38</sup> But because he was present, the age to come in a sense was a reality; the fellowship with the risen Lord was a real one.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door,<sup>39</sup> I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

The relationship of the bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ has also caused a considerable amount of difficulty. The Roman Catholic church in its doctrine of transubstantiation, insists that after consecration the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ.

. . . the mystery of the Eucharist is intended to give us a practical lesson. The miracle of the transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Jesus is directed towards the mystery of the Eucharist, the gift of Christ's body as a divine food. The Eucharist makes present to us the body of Christ, of the Lamb of God who suffered on the cross, of the Lamb glorified in Heaven, by giving it to us as food.<sup>40</sup>

Luther adopted the view, sometimes "inaccurately referred to as con-

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26.

<sup>39</sup> Revelations 3:20.

<sup>40</sup> M. D. Philippe, The Worship of God, p. 120.



substantiation",<sup>41</sup> where after the elements have been consecrated, Christ is present alongside the bread and the wine.

In baptism we see only the water, so here we see only the bread and wine. But as by the Word and command of God the water is a gracious water of life, so the Word of God declares we receive the body and blood of our glorified Saviour in, with, and under the bread and wine.<sup>42</sup>

Luther's position has been modified and strengthened somewhat by the present day Lutheran church.

. . . the Eucharist is the church's supreme act of worship, its highest, holiest endeavor to realize communion with God. Here as nowhere else is the Christian conscious of the presence of his Lord and Saviour, the Jesus of the Judean hills, the Christ of history and the Lord of all eternity. Here as nowhere else is there such concentration of all Christ's words and works in the realization of his completed act of redemption. Here as nowhere else is there such conviction of our actual participation in the salvation he has won for us-- participation through incorporation with his own true body in the Sacrament and in fellowship with his mystical body, the church.<sup>43</sup>

Aulen interprets the real presence in somewhat similar terms.

When the words of institution designate the bread as the body of Christ and the wine as his blood, the meaning of this identification is quite clear. It is not a question of 'transubstantiation' or 'consubstantiation'. In this connection all such ideas are excluded. . . . What the Lord says when he gives the bread and the wine to his disciples is that he gives himself, his body and blood, for them. The interpretative words do not speak about something that is to happen to the bread and the wine, but about that which will happen to him. By the giving of the bread and the wine he actualizes the sacrifice which immediately follows and thereby also the whole mystery of redemption included in that sacrifice.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup>K. S. Latourette, A History of Christianity, p. 712.

<sup>42</sup>Lenker, Luther's Catechetical Writings, p. 188.

<sup>43</sup>Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 243.

<sup>44</sup>Aulén, Eucharist and Sacrifice, p. 158.



The words spoken by Christ during the last supper were meant to give the disciples an idea of what was to happen to him. The bread and the wine though compared with his own body and blood were intended to form a relationship between the elements and himself, rather than between the elements and his body and blood, i.e. they were to be used symbolically. Each time the meal was to be celebrated in accordance with the Master's wish, his presence was to change a simple gathering into a redeeming fellowship.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?<sup>45</sup>

The bread and the wine for Paul were means whereby the worshipper could share in the sacrifice of Christ.

The declaration in the Gospel of John that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you",<sup>46</sup> has complicated the matter somewhat. Though the statement is not made in the context of the Lord's Supper proper, the language used is direct enough to make the connection implicit. Rather than having a literal meaning as has been ascribed to them in the doctrine of transubstantiation, the words, according to Aulen, are all part of the Incarnation theme of the fourth gospel, i.e. the word made flesh. As the Lord humbled himself to become man, so too, his presence is humbly associated with the bread. The literalism of John's sayings are mini-

<sup>45</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16.

<sup>46</sup> John 6:53.



mized through his insistence on belief. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."<sup>47</sup> The body and blood then, are used symbolically to denote Christ himself. To offer these as food is to offer himself. Anyone who desires this fellowship receives the gift of life.

The entire gospel is characterized by the two ideas of flesh and blood and belief. This emphasis was necessary in order to oppose two teachings which were being circulated at the time of writing. One was the idea taught by the docetists and the gnostics that Jesus had not come in the flesh. The other was the idea that merely to eat the flesh of the god was enough to impart life as was the case with the mystery religions. Because these two teachings of John are central in the sacrament, a strong case could be made for the idea that apart from the sacrament and the partaking of the flesh and blood, there could be no gift of eternal life. Yet the whole gospel must be understood in the light of John's symbolic use of words.

Finally, another point which should be considered in this presentation is the relationship of the crucifixion and the resurrection in the Lord's Supper; the problem which Paul was confronted with in his correspondence with the church at Corinth. Here, Paul was faced with some discrepancies in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. . . . Whoever, there-

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<sup>47</sup> John 6:47.



fore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>48</sup>

There were some who regarded the Supper primarily as a Heavenly meal. Christ was victorious over death and so the attitude was one of celebration. This spiritual enthusiasm resulted in an abuse of the meal in that courtesy was forgotten. The over-emphasis on the triumphant aspect of Christ's sacrifice left the crucifixion in the background. In an effort to restore the meal to its proper perspective, Paul stated his position by trying to take both sides into account.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.<sup>49</sup>

This was not to deny the joyous element of the meal, rather it was an affirmation by Paul that both the crucifixion and the resurrection were part of the Lord's Supper. The importance of both aspects were implied in his writings.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.<sup>50</sup>

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.<sup>51</sup>

The risen Lord for Paul was the same Lord who suffered death on the cross. The Lord's Supper was a proclamation of the redemption

<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:21, 21 and 27.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:2.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:13 and 14.



achieved by the death and resurrection of Christ. For the church to observe the Eucharist, was the same as to have fellowship with him. "The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"<sup>52</sup> "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."<sup>53</sup> Paul's point in the argument was not to eliminate the joy but the caricature of joy which appeared in the celebrations at Corinth.

The importance of both points of view are upheld by Aulén. If the resurrection alone were considered, the cost of the victory would be ignored as would the strength of the forces of evil and man's own inability to help himself. If these were lost sight of, then the reason for the sacrifice would also be lost. On the other hand, to regard the crucifixion by itself would be equally as dangerous. Christ's vicarious death then becomes something anyone else can do and his sufferings on our behalf are merely the clue for a few tears.

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<sup>52</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16b.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE EUCHARIST AND THE EARLY CHURCH

It has been generally held that the early church's observance of the Eucharist was of one form with one meaning. It is true that the outline was similar as was the eucharistic prayer in both its content and phrasing.<sup>1</sup> But beyond this the assumption is invalid as the particular rites of each historic family differed in both the detailed observance and the meaning. The latter could be seen from the various meanings already attached to the Eucharist in the New Testament.

It was the solemn proclamation of the Lord's death. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."<sup>2</sup> It was the abiding presence of a friend. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."<sup>3</sup> It was a foretaste of the Messianic banquet. "You are those

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26

<sup>3</sup> Revelations 3:20.



who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."<sup>4</sup> It was the meaning of all sacrifice. "For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."<sup>5</sup> It was the means for the unity of His church. ". . . that they may be one, even as we are one."<sup>6</sup>

Each church had received the rite along with the gospel itself. The observance was basic to their being received into the Body of Christ. There were attempts at interpretation but none were thought of as being the final word. The eucharistic prayer which put the meaning of the rite into words varied with the experience of the particular bishop. As time went on certain phrases became hallowed, but even as late as the fourth century, the prayer was still comparatively variable. With the removal of persecution in this same century, the various churches attempted to iron out many of the differences. Out of this assimilation along with the fifth century collapse of the political situation, two major rites came to the forefront; that of the Byzantine East and that of the Roman West. The Protestant Reformation resulted in an attempt to provide a truer observance of the rite, but even here

<sup>4</sup>Luke 22:28-30.

<sup>5</sup>Hebrews 9:24.

<sup>6</sup>John 17:11c.



the basic principles in the observance were still Roman in their outlook.

The observance in the west is looked at as something that is "said". The clergy "take" the service; the laity merely attend. Prior to the fourth century the rite was regarded as something that was "done". The early Christians spoke of "doing the Eucharist" and were not too concerned with arousing a feeling of devoutness. The differences which have come to be regarded as basic to each observance came gradually over the years. The change from both the laity and the clergy having essential parts to play in the rite to the clergy doing the complete rite on behalf of the laity came in the fourth century in the East and spread to the West. The change in emphasis from doing to saying was limited to the West and came during the early middle ages. The consecration of the bread and wine came to be looked at differently as well. In the West, the idea was for the laity to see what was going on, thus the celebrant who faced the altar elevated the bread and wine. In the East, the attitude of the worshipper was that the consecration was something too sacred for him to see, so a screen was placed between the worshipper and the celebrant. The Eucharist, originally a private feast by nature, became a public one. What was primarily a corporate action by the whole church became something carried out by one person on behalf of the others. Both of these changes resulted in a decreased attendance by the laity. Repeated admonitions over the centuries have not been successful in bringing the laity back to any great extent.



### THE SHAPE OF THE LITURGY

The term liturgy applies to the worship of the church as a whole rather than that of a particular group or individual. In this sense, it was a corporate action, something in which all the members of the Body of Christ were involved.

The primitive core of the liturgy was divided into two main parts; the Synaxis or meeting, and the Eucharist or thanksgiving. The two were adaptations of the Jewish synagogue service and the Kiddush respectively. Originally they could be observed separately but from the fourth century on, the two were gradually fused.

The Synaxis centered around the Bible. There were readings from various parts interspersed with chants from the Psalms. The bishop expounded on the readings. Anyone was welcome to attend, be he Christian, Jew or pagan. Prayer was considered an expression of the church alone, so prior to the prayers at the conclusion of the meeting the non-church members were asked to leave. As each subject of a prayer was announced, the members prayed silently on their knees then stood while the summing up was done in a collect. An opening greeting started the service; a short dismissal ended it.

The Eucharist which generally followed the Synaxis was a short, concise expression of what the church was commanded to do at the last supper. This supper was considered a prelude to the rite rather than an expression of it. The new meaning present in the Eucharist and spoken of in the last supper was fulfilled when Christ was received into his Kingdom. The significance which the church saw in Christ's life and death and which the disciples could not



see in the last supper was brought out in the Eucharist which was intended to be "the response of the redeemed to the redeemer."<sup>7</sup>

The whole of the meal was celebrated until the end of the first century when the meal proper was dropped. The meal continued as the Agape or Lord's Supper but the observance of which gradually disappeared after a few centuries. It had come to be used primarily as a welfare feast for the poor of a community. What was left after the meal was dropped became the Eucharist proper. The variation in the observance can be seen from a comparison of the accounts of the rite given by Paul and that given by the writers of the gospels.

When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. . . . For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'<sup>8</sup>

The account from Matthew meanwhile, seems to assume that the blessing of the wine follows immediately upon the blessing of the bread.

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:20 and 21, 23-25.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 26:26-28.



The form of the Eucharist took four specific and distinct parts: the offertory, the prayer, the fraction and the communion. There were minor additions prior to the fourth century and certainly many more following but these four parts were basic to the core of the liturgy, Eastern and Western alike.

At the offertory, the communicant brought a little bread and wine and placed them upon the altar. There were no words said, the action was complete in the presenting. The offertory prayer did not appear until the end of the fourth century. The East and West differed slightly as to how the offering was made. In the East the communicant placed them on a table off to one side before the service started. The deacons brought them when necessary. In the West, the communicants brought the offering to the chancel rail at the appropriate time and the deacons took them to the altar. Eventually the bringing of the offering in the East became an elaborate ceremony. In the West, the only response later was a prayer muttered by the celebrant. In the East, the bread became the "holy loaf"; in the West it took the form of a small round wafer.

The eucharistic prayer was the sole responsibility of the bishop. The purpose of the prayer was to give a verbal meaning to the whole rite. The fraction or breaking of the bread was done simply as a convenient means for distribution. The symbolic idea, if any was required, was that of the unity of the church rather than of the breaking of Christ's body as was the case later. With this later interpretation, the fraction was erroneously placed in the middle of the eucharistic prayer where the words of Christ at the last supper



occurred, i.e. the familiar "words of institution."

The communion, the climax of the early rite, was administered by the deacons. The Council of Nicaea in 325 reduced the deacons to that of being mere assistants to the Presbyters and the Bishop who were to have the major role in the celebration. The communion was made standing; celebrants first, then the laity. The words of administration were Johannine at first, e.g. "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven. . . he who eats this bread will live forever."<sup>10</sup> That the consecrated bread and wine were in reality the Body and Blood of Christ was not questioned, but the actual use of the synoptic wording "The Body of Christ" and "The Blood of Christ" did not come until the third or fourth century.

This, together with a preliminary greeting and a short dismissal, formed the core of the Eucharist. It was essential that any disputes between members had to be settled first. And because the Eucharist was a corporate expression of the whole church, the rite was handicapped were any members not present. When an addition was made like the "Amen" following the prayer, for example, it had a definite meaning of its own. In this case the Amen was not a mere assent to the prayer on the part of the laity, it was in effect a "proclamation of faith by the laity for themselves."<sup>11</sup>

What for the Jew was a longing hope for the future coming of God's truth, was for the Christian a triumphant proclamation that in Jesus, the Amen to the everlasting Yea of God, he had himself passed into the Messianic Kingdom and the world to

<sup>10</sup> John 6:58.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 129.



come. It was the summary of his faith in Jesus, his Redeemer, and in God, his Father and King. As such it was the fitting conclusion to the last words of the Christian scriptures; and an equally fitting response alike to the eucharistic prayer and the words of administration, where that redemption and that fatherhood and kingship find their full actuality within time.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the simplicity and brevity of the whole rite, there was no bareness to it. The rite was an action and in the very movement itself there was an element of ceremony. The normal speaking voice was not used until the middle ages, the normal pattern of presentation was that of a chant copied no doubt from the Jewish service. Yet in spite of all this:

... the impression left by the early evidence about the celebration of the eucharist is not so much of simplicity as of great directness, as became a deliberately 'domestic' act. There was no elaborate or choral music at the eucharist as at the synaxis; no special vestments or liturgical ornaments or symbolism, nothing whatever to arouse the emotions or stir the senses or impress the mind--just a complete and intense concentration upon the corporate performance of the eucharistic action in its naked self, without devotional elaborations of any kind whatever.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE MEANING OF THE EARLY EUCHARIST

The Eucharist was an action, an action whose meaning was given in the prayer. This was as true in the early period when the Eucharist was a separate service as in the later period when it was fused with the Synaxis. The prayer was not one of consecration nor

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 141.



was it an offertory one. It was simply a Eucharistic prayer stating as clearly and simply as possible the meaning of the whole rite. That the prayer consecrated was never in doubt and once it had been said by the celebrant, the rite was the Eucharist with all that it implied. The thought arose that if the prayer consecrated the whole of the Eucharist and in particular the elements, was there a phrase, the repetition of which accomplished all that was done, i.e. was there a moment of consecration? Questions such as these arose and diverted the energies of many Christian scholars. Sincere as they might have been, the only purpose served by such questions from this writer's point of view was to cloud the whole interpretation of the Eucharist.

The question of eucharistic sacrifice was not seriously considered during the first five centuries. It was simply taken for granted that if the rite were properly carried out it was a sacrifice. This was true, too, with regard to the unity of Christ and the sacrifice.

. . . it is the absolute unity of the church's sacrifice in the eucharist with that of Christ--unity of the Offerer (for it is Christ 'our High-Priest' who offers through the church, His Body), unity of the offering (for that which is offered is what He offered, His Body and Blood), unity of the effects (which cleanses us)--it is the indissoluble unity of the eucharist with the sacrifice of Christ Himself which is the basis of the ancient eucharistic theology.<sup>14</sup>

The question as to how the bread and wine and the Body and Blood were related was never considered; it was also taken for granted. What

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 244.



for the modern West has been a source of contention was for the early church an accepted fact. The reason was that the approach to the Eucharist was different. The emphasis now is on the consecration of the bread and wine. The importance of the offering thus made depends upon the particular theory or doctrine of the real presence. The early church meanwhile considered that in the whole rite it was just doing what Christ did and what happened was what he intended should happen. Instead of making the sacrifice dependent upon the sacrament, they made the sacrament dependent upon the sacrifice.

The individual offered his bread and wine. By so doing, he offered himself. Because of the corporate nature of the church, the members in effect were making a corporate offering. Carrying this a step further, the church as the body of Christ was offering itself and because the church was in reality the living body of Christ, the Eucharist was Christ offering himself. ". . . the unity of Christ and the church is not something achieved (though it is intensified) in communion; it underlies the whole action from start to finish."<sup>15</sup> With the concentration of the liturgy in the hands of the clergy, the offering tended to become less and less a corporate one and more and more an individualistic one. The corporate aspect of the liturgy which was so vital to the early church gradually gave way to an emphasis which was merely personal in nature.

Another interpretation which was common in the early church

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 247.



but which by and large is absent now was that of the Eucharist being the fulfillment of God's purpose, i.e. the eschatological viewpoint. To the Jew, history had a beginning and would eventually have an end. "The Day of the Lord" when God's rule would prevail was the inevitable conclusion of history. Life could have a continuation beyond this point but as far as the time process was concerned that was it. Without this end, life itself would have no meaning. The Christian coming out of his Jewish background believed that with the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God's purpose had been revealed and the age to come had already dawned. Those "in Christ" were part of that age. This double view of the eschaton or fulfillment was not a contradiction in the sense that while the end had come history still continued.

This view of eschatology as manifesting the purpose of history already within time does not deny a 'last judgement'; rather it demands a total judgement of all history in the light of that purpose.<sup>16</sup>

The Greek word *anamnesis* which has often been translated remembrance conveys more than this. The re-calling was more than an historical activity. The two thoughts of the eschaton have for the most part been considered separately, but for the early church this was one single event. Through the Eucharist the church became part of the eternal Kingdom. This viewpoint is hard to grasp for modern-day Christians for whom the influence of any eschatological ideas has been almost negligible. The difficulty for non-Jewish ears to fully grasp this idea resulted in the later church re-interpreting

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 263.



this to the effect that the early Jewish Christians were disappointed when the expected fulfillment did not come and adapted the eschaton accordingly. But however hard the idea was to grasp for Christians later on, it was one of the underlying ideas of the early church.

#### THE EFFECT OF TIME

After the Pauline period, the next two hundred years of Christian worship were performed in the background of real danger and intense hatred. Though persecution was not continuous, Christian worship was a capital crime at any time. Together with the secrecy of the rite, the talk about the body and the blood gave rise to unpleasant rumors about ritual murder and cannibalistic feasts. The government though better informed regarded the church as a potential danger. Because the test of Christianity was for a person to take part in Christian worship and for a Christian to take part in any pagan ceremony was considered apostasy, i.e. a renouncing of one's faith in Christ, the government simply took steps to prevent the holding of Christian worship. It made no attempt until the last formal persecution to discredit Christian beliefs or to defend the pagan ones. The general public on the other hand were after martyrs which was the price of admitting to being a Christian. The state through its magistrates would have preferred those caught at Christian services of worship to apostatize. Once a Christian became an apostate he was automatically and permanently removed from the fellowship of the church and thus was in no position to do the state any harm. The apprehended Christians out of fear for their lives oftentimes denied their Lord and



later came to regret their action. The loss of great numbers of Christians because of the increased efforts of the state to force them to apostatize resulted in the church changing its position. Apostates could be reinstated after a long period of penance to prove their repentance. The action enabled the church to withstand its greatest persecution during the early part of the fourth century.

With all this persecution which surrounded the Eucharist, it would have been much easier and safer to have fulfilled the sense of devotion at home with the reserved sacrament. The Christians were normal people; they were scared of being caught and they did not exactly look forward to torture and death. Yet, in spite of these dangers, the Christians came together regularly with their bread and wine to observe the Eucharist.

What brought the Christian to the eucharist week by week, despite all dangers and inconveniences, was not the thrill provoked by the service itself which was bare and unimpressive, to the point of dullness, and would soon lose any attraction of novelty. Nor yet was it a longing for personal communion with God, which he could and did fulfil otherwise in his daily communion from the reserved sacrament at home. What brought him was an intense belief that in the eucharistic action of the Body of Christ, as in no other way, he himself took a part in that act of sacrificial obedience to the will of God which was consummated on Calvary and which had redeemed the world, including himself. What brought him was the conviction that there rested on each of the redeemed an absolute necessity so to take his own part in the self-offering of Christ, a necessity more binding even than the instinct of self-preservation. Simply as members of Christ's Body, the church, all Christians must do this, and they can do it in no other way than that which was the last command of Jesus to His own.<sup>17</sup>

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Ibid., p. 153.



With the reign of Constantine, the official persecution of the church by the state came to an end. The change was startling. Not only did a large proportion of the leaders and the masses accept Christianity, but it meant that all of life, socially and politically, came under the influence of the gospel. A compassion for people began to be the rule rather than a blood-thirstiness. It did not necessarily mean that cruelty and lust and misuse of power disappeared. It did mean that these were now challenged in the name of justice and mercy.

The common criticism of this period was that the church lost its spirituality. The early church was not without its faults as the New Testament letters testify. The additional fault that the church now had was the ever-present temptation to court the favour of the secular ruler. This temptation was early recognized for what it was and the church took steps to curb it as much as possible. And if Constantine and those who followed him were rather vague in their profession of Christianity, there was not much the church could do in the matter but to accept them. If the church had been caught off guard by the new turn of events, it reacted quickly and boldly to meet the challenge.

Right faith and right conduct were still the only requirements of the Christian worshipper, and the act of Christian worship was still the only measure of a Christian in the eyes of the church. But the range of Christian belief and conduct now covered the whole of human life, as it could not do in pre-Nicene days. The century ends with a great constellation of Christian doctors and theologians who presented the faith both to the church and to the human mind at large, no longer only as a theological system with an inner coherence superior to the pagan myths, as the old apologists had done, but as the key to the riddle of all



human existence, with its sorrows and littleness, yet shot through with an almost divine beauty and terror and hope.<sup>18</sup>

The cessation of persecution brought with it a change in the interpretation of the Eucharist. The historical now took preference over the eschatological. While the world hungered for martyrs, the emphasis had to be on the eternal aspect. Now what was desired was an idea of how to live a Christian life day by day and so an historical interpretation was necessary.

The change brought with it still another problem. Now that the whole of the populace was nominally Christian there was no clear-cut distinction as to who could and who could not attend the Eucharist. The dismissal just prior to the prayers became a mere formality. It did not take long for the two parts of the liturgy to be considered as one single whole. The fusion of the two was accompanied by another questionable change; the layman's sole contribution to the Eucharist was his presence. With these changes it was inevitable that alterations and additions would be made to the liturgy. If this became something performed by the celebrant on behalf of those present then every attempt would surely be made to make the celebration impressive. As long as the members shared in the worship, all were conscious of the claims that their Lord made upon them. But with the members reduced to being mere listeners, the onus to exhort, to convince, to arouse, seemed to be the lot of the celebrant, a condition which unfortunately is still real in the twentieth century church.

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Ibid., p. 392.



These features were incorporated into the liturgy in the familiar forms of prayers, chants and responses, plus any other items which the bishop together with his presbyters found suitable.

The present-day liturgies of the various streams of Christianity, be they Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Anglican or Reformed differ from each other but bear a resemblance to the liturgy of the fourth century. The liturgical movement amongst the churches which has been especially noticed during these last few years may produce a startling innovation which would restore the communicant to his former dignity as a participant and reintroduce the concept of the Eucharist as a corporate action. The movement may bring about a change in attitude on the part of the clergy who though schooled in the tradition of exhorters and celebrants would be able to offer with rather than on behalf of the members their "acceptable sacrifice".

It is unlikely that merely introducing changes would be of much help. Any desired improvement will come only as a result of the Holy Spirit working through a congregation. And even then, the answer would not necessarily be a return to the liturgy of the early church. It would be rather a recognition that even with the varied liturgies as we have them now, they can be an "offering acceptable to God which is our spiritual worship".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 12:1b.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POSITIONS OF SOME CHURCHES ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

#### THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic position is defined in two articles made at the Council of Trent in 1545.

d. On the Eucharist. Chapter 4. On Transubstantiation

Since Christ our Redeemer said that that which he offered under the appearance of bread was truly his body, it has therefore always been held in the church of God, and this holy Synod now declares anew, that through consecration of the bread and wine there comes about a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. And this conversion is by the Holy Catholic Church conveniently called transubstantiation.<sup>1</sup>

f. On the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Chapter 2.

And since in this divine Sacrifice which is performed in the Mass, that same Christ is contained in a bloodless sacrifice who on the altar of the cross once offered himself with the shedding of his blood: the holy Synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and through it it comes about that if with true hearts and right faith, with fear and reverence, with contrition and penitence, we approach God we 'attain mercy and find grace and help in time of need' (Hebrews 4:16). For God, propitiated by the oblation of this sacrifice, granting us grace

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<sup>1</sup> Documents of the Christian Church, ed. Henry Bettenson, p. 368.



and the gift of penitence, remits our faults and even our enormous sins. For there is the one and the same victim, now offering through the ministry of the priesthood, who then offered himself upon the cross; the only difference is in the method of the offering. The fruits of this (the bloody) oblation are perceived most fully through this bloodless oblation; so far is it from taking any honour from the former. Wherefore it is rightly offered, in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles, not only for the sins, penances, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful living, but also for the dead in Christ, whose purification is not yet accomplished.<sup>2</sup>

The position is regarded as doctrine as far as the Roman Catholic church is concerned. The decisions of the Council were regarded as final and any attempt at enlargement is rather a hazardous undertaking for fear of running counter to ecclesiastical rulings. The emotional reaction against the position is reflected in the writings of Luther and Calvin. The strong reaction to defend the position of the church on the other hand is reflected in the reassessments of the Council.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is an important part of the Roman Catholic concept of the Mass. The history of the doctrine is traced by Henry Bettenson in Documents of the Christian Church and his summary is quoted in full by the writer.

The doctrine of the Eucharist was not a subject of controversy in the first centuries, and therefore the need for precise formulation did not arise. The tendency to advance from the assertion of the real presence of Christ's flesh and blood to a precise theory of the mode of his presence in the elements was more marked in the East than in the West, and most distinct in the 'De Fide Orthodoxa' of John of Damascus, c. 750. In the West the influence of Augustine, of whom, 'obscure though his view of the Eucharist undoubtedly

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 370.



is, it is at any rate certain that he did not believe in transubstantiation' (Gore, *Dissertations*, 232), was for many centuries predominant, and during that period the Western writers are on the whole content to speak of the consecrated elements as signs.

In the ninth century Paschasius Radbertus published a treatise, 'On the Body and Blood of the Lord', in which he pushed to extremes the language of John Damascene, '... though the body and blood of Christ remain in the figure of bread and wine, yet we must believe them to be simply a figure and that, after consecration, they are nothing else than the body and blood of Christ. . . and that I may speak more marvellously, to be clearly the very flesh which was born of Mary, and suffered on the cross and rose from the tomb. . .' (op. cit. i.2). This view was opposed by Rabanus Maurus, who strongly attacked the notion that the 'body' of the Eucharist was the same as the 'flesh' of the incarnate Lord. And Ratramnus, a monk of the abbey of which Radbert was abbot, went so far in combating the doctrine of his superior as sometimes to appear to hold the 'virtualist' position--viz. that through consecration the Eucharistic elements are made spiritually efficacious for the faithful recipient without any 'real' or 'objective' change. But the teaching of Paschasius had won its way to general acceptance by the middle of the eleventh century, and when Berengar of Tours in 1050 proclaimed his adherence to the 'teaching of John the Scot' (sc. *Scotus Erigena*, to whom Ratramnus' work seems to have been ascribed) he was opposed by Lanfranc and condemned at Rome. In 1059 he was induced to assent to a most materialistic statement of the 'faith delivered by Pope Nicholas II and the Roman Synod': 'that the bread and wine placed on the altar are after consecration not only a sacrament but also the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and that these are sensibly handled and broken by the hands of priests and crushed by the teeth of the faithful, not only sacramentally but in reality. . .' (Mansi, xix. 900). In 1079, after he had persisted in teaching his former doctrine, Berengar was again forced to profess his orthodoxy, this time under Gregory VII, who had formerly been sympathetic and now required merely an assertion of the belief in the 'substantial' change of the elements into 'the real flesh of Christ which was born of the Virgin, etc. . .' (Mansi, xx. 524).

Peter Lombard, the most influential theologian of the twelfth century, maintained the 'substantial' presence of Christ's body under the accidents of the elements, but recognized the philosophical difficulties entailed in any precise statement



of 'transubstantiation'. He repudiated the assertion (contained in Berengar's confession of 1059, and in many anti-Berengarian writers) of the breaking of Christ's body in the fraction of the bread.

The term transubstantiation seems to have been adopted in the twelfth century; but it is impossible to say at what time it came to have a technical meaning, that is, to convey more than the assertion that the elements after consecration are 'really' the body and blood. So that when in 1215 the 4th Lateran Council decreed that 'the body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the species of bread and wine; the bread being transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by the power of God. . .' (Mansi xxii. 982), it is impossible to assert with confidence that this statement anticipates the authorization by the Council of Trent of the kind of doctrine elaborated by S. Thomas.

In its technical sense transubstantiation denotes a doctrine which is based on the Aristotelean philosophy as taught by the schoolmen, according to which a physical object consists of 'accidents', the properties perceptible by the senses, and an underlying 'substance' in which the accidents inhere, and which gives to the object its essential nature. According to the doctrine of transubstantiation the accidents of bread and wine remain after consecration, but their substance is changed into that of the body and blood of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The position of the Roman Catholic church has come as a gradual development over the years of church councils and unfortunate as it may be for mutual discussion, the position has remained unchanged since the Reformation period. Slight changes in viewpoints by some Roman Catholic scholars will be noted in the next chapter but whether or not this will result in any change in the official position of the church only time will tell. In view of the claims of the Roman church, the writer is rather skeptical of any changes being made from the definitions established at the Council of Trent.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 205.



## THE POSITION OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Anglo-Catholic position is presented first. The basis for the writer's information is the Anglo-Catholic Congress Book, Volume II, entitled Word and Sacraments.

The Lord's Supper is without question a sacrifice. Jesus is both the High Priest and the victim and as such fulfils the requirements for a sacrifice. According to the author of Book No. 26, S. R. P. Mouldsdale, the Sacrifice of the Mass was greatly misunderstood by the reformers and the misunderstanding resulted in them disregarding sacrifice in their consideration of the Lord's Supper. But sacrifice, the idea of making an offering to God, is fundamental to human nature and therefore is basic to the Lord's Supper.

Sacrifice has three purposes: to acknowledge that God is sovereign, which is implied by the worshippers' dedication; to offer in the form of a peace offering; and because sin enters into the picture, to effect a reconciliation. In the Eucharist, these are present. Christ's death effected the reconciliation by removing the barrier of sin. His continual intercession before God as the Heavenly High Priest accomplishes the peace offering and by taking part in the Eucharist, the worshipper identifies himself with both the High Priest and the victim and makes possible his dedication. The imperfections of the old sacrifices were removed by the sacrifice on Calvary. Because there was a perfect priest and a perfect victim, the sacrifice was perfect and therefore no need to be repeated. Because of Christ's continual intercession in heaven and the worshipper's



presence at the Mass, the achievements are valid for all time. The Roman idea that Christ is offered afresh at every celebration of the Mass is strongly repudiated. The sacrifice was made once and any repetition would mean that the first sacrifice lacked perfection.

Moulsdale draws some implications from the Anglo-Catholic position.

1. The continual intercession by Christ forms the basis of any prayer that is made in his name.
2. The Mass is the prime expression of Christian worship. The dedication, the offering of thanksgiving, the deliverance from sin, all form part of the Sunday obligation to worship God. Any less would be an impoverishment.

As to the real presence of Christ, the interpretation is unchanged from the Roman position, i.e. after the consecration the bread and the wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. The only way that life can be imparted is through partaking of Christ's flesh and blood. The Gospel of John is quoted in support of this, ". . . unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."<sup>4</sup> Because life in Christ is basic for the Christian's existence, the importance of the Eucharist cannot be overestimated. The partaking of the actual body and blood of Christ has laid a stress upon the preparation of the worshipper. Physically, he was to prepare his body by fasting. Spiritually, the wastes were to

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<sup>4</sup> John 6:53b.



be removed through confession. Before and after communion, the worshipper was to spend his time in prayer.

Another development from the consecration of the elements was in the idea of the "reservation of the Blessed Sacrament". There were occasions when people could not be present at the Mass. Where circumstance or time prevented any celebration of the Mass, there had to be some means whereby communicants could still receive the sacrament. This gave rise to the idea of reservation. Once the elements were consecrated they remained the flesh and blood of Christ. Hence, it was a simple matter to carry the elements to the sick and imprisoned or to have some on hand in case of an emergency such as impending death.

Though the above represents a strong segment of thought within the Anglican communion, the official position on the real presence and the sacrifice is defined by the Articles of Religion as follows:

#### XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper.

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an Heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.



The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.<sup>5</sup>

### XXXI. Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross.

The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of the Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.<sup>6</sup>

Though there is agreement that the sacrifice of Christ was performed once and for all, this is not the case with the idea of the real presence. Here the Anglo-Catholic position is contrary to the official position of the church as stated in the "Articles". Yet in spite of the opposing views, the two groups still continue to form part of the Anglican Communion.

### THE LUTHERAN POSITION

Luther D. Reed in The Lutheran Liturgy discusses the liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America. Central to the liturgy, according to Reed, is the Service itself.

What we call the Service is not a nondescript collection of devotional forms. It has but one theme and that is the loftiest. It lives to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and through it to reveal God to the world. It lives to offer the Holy Sacrament for the spiritual comfort and strengthening of believers. It lives to express the faith, gratitude and joy of the Christian communities. As the church's normal order of worship on the Lord's Day it is unique, purposeful, powerful.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Book of Common Prayer, p. 698.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 698.

<sup>7</sup> Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 228.



Although the basis for the liturgy was found in the teachings of Luther, the Lutheran church has sought through constant revision to give its members "a historical completeness surpassing that of the Anglican liturgy, and a richness and distinctive quality not found at all in the miscellaneous unhistorical orders of worship of non-liturgical churches."<sup>8</sup>

For the Lutheran, the Reformation was a rediscovery of the Gospel and with it the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With Luther's revision came personal involvement. Grace and salvation were gifts for the individual to enjoy. And nowhere were these gifts to be more perceived than in the sacrament itself. The church rejects the idea of transubstantiation but it very strongly asserts the concept of the real presence. Reed quotes Charles M. Jacob in The Ministry and the Sacraments to illustrate his point. The writer requotes in part:

The Real Presence of Christ with the bread and wine of the Eucharist presents no difficulties to faith. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again and is our living Lord and Saviour, why should we not believe that he can be really present, where and as He will? If we believe that the Christ who now lives is the same Jesus who endured the suffering of the Cross, why should we doubt that His humanity, as well as His deity, is present in and with the sacrament? If we believe that in the Resurrection, Christ's human body was transformed, and became, in St. Paul's phrase, 'a spiritual body', why should we stumble at the thought of a 'bodily presence'? . . .

That in the Lord's Supper Christ comes to us, not only in a word that He spoke nineteen hundred years ago, but in His very person; that this Christ is the same Jesus who was with the Twelve in the Upper Room 'on the night in which He was betrayed', who died upon a Roman cross and rose from the grave in Joseph's garden; that we may know Him close to us, 'closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet'; that our souls can feel His nearness, our hearts



go out to Him in adoration, our lives be renewed by contact with His own--that is the meaning of the Real Presence. That we, of times far distant from His own, might be thus keenly conscious that He is with us, Jesus said, 'This is My body; this is My blood.'<sup>9</sup>

Sacrifice does not play a significant part in Lutheran worship. Luther's strong objections to sacrifice has very markedly influenced the Lutheran tradition. Yet Reed feels that sacrifice is an essential part of the sacrament. He agrees that Christ's sacrifice was accomplished once and for all, but beyond this the Lutheran position is not defined. Reed is careful to avoid any false implications that might arise should he try to enlarge on the idea of sacrifice. Sharing in the sacrifice, for example, would not necessarily be the same as having spiritual union with Christ. The sacrifice of moral obedience as encouraged by Paul, however, is accepted.

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.<sup>10</sup>

Though the Lutheran position on Christ's sacrifice and the real presence are not as explicit as in some of the other communions, the intention, nevertheless, is to preserve a communion with God as free of any misconceptions as is possible.

. . . the Eucharist is the church's supreme act of worship, its highest, holiest endeavor to realize actual communion with God. . . . Here as nowhere else is there such conviction of our actual participation in the salvation he has won for us--participation through incorporation with his own

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 12:1.



true body in the Sacrament, and in fellowship with his mystical body, the church.<sup>11</sup>

The main part of the sacrament are the words which Jesus used in the blessing of the bread and wine. These words preserved by Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) are considered by each communion as the "Words of Institution". The Lutheran phraseology differs very slightly from that of the writer's own United Church of Canada.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my Body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the New Testament in my Blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (Lutheran)<sup>12</sup>

According to the holy example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in remembrance of him, we do this; who, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, as we do now give thanks to thee, O Eternal Father, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup; saying, This Cup is the New Covenant in my Blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (United)<sup>13</sup>

In the Roman Catholic liturgy of Luther's day, these words were surrounded by various prayers and responses to form what was called the "Canon" of the Mass. It was during this portion of the sacrament

<sup>11</sup> Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 243.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>13</sup> The Book of Common Order, p. 118.



that the change in the elements was effected or to use a more Protestant wording, the presence of Christ became real. The elements were consecrated. Luther was extremely sensitive about the "miracle" which he wrought every time he said the Canon. The effects of his break with Rome were especially noted at this point. The Canon was too corrupt theologically, he felt, and as a result he cut out everything except the words of institution and the Lord's Prayer. This has been since then the standard Lutheran canon.

Reed feels that Luther was a little too rash to reduce the canon to such an extent. It has meant a loss in beauty and a sense of devotion. To leave the consecration as such makes the whole recital a type of mechanical process. In spite of the strong feelings involved in holding to Luther's position, Reed thinks that the canon ought to be enlarged.

Notwithstanding the force of this position, many Lutherans have long desired something richer, warmer, and emotionally more expressive--something less likely to foster erroneous conceptions and something more in harmony with the New Testament account and with the thought and practice of the universal church.<sup>14</sup>

The present liturgy does contain a form of the early Eucharistic prayer. It is an attempt to preserve the meaning of the Lord's supper and yet retain in its form the Protestant expression of the Gospel,

#### THE REFORMED TRADITION

The Reformed tradition, of which the United Church of Canada

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<sup>14</sup> Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 348.



forms a part, draws many of its views from the writings of Calvin.

His views on the Lord's Supper were outlined in his Short Treatise on the Supper of Our Lord, written in 1540. Article 51 of the Treatise outlines as well as any his position on the matter.

Hence also we see how those to whom God has given the knowledge of his truth should differ from the Papists. First, they cannot doubt that it is abominable blasphemy to regard the Mass as a sacrifice by which the forgiveness of sins is purchased for us; or rather, that the priest is a kind of mediator to apply the merit of Christ's passion and death to those who purchase his mass, or are present at it, or feel devotion for it. On the contrary, they must hold decidedly that the death and suffering of the Lord is the only sacrifice by which the anger of God has been satisfied, and eternal righteousness procured for us; and likewise, that the Lord Jesus has entered into the heavenly sanctuary in order to appear there for us, and intercede in virtue of his sacrifice. Moreover, they will readily grant, that the benefit of his death is communicated to us in the Supper, not by the merit of the act, but because of the promises which are given us, provided we receive them in faith. Secondly, they should on no account grant that the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Jesus Christ, nor the wine into his blood, but should persist in holding that the visible signs retain their true substance, in order to represent the spiritual reality of which we have spoken. Thirdly, they ought also to hold for certain, that the Lord gives us in the Supper that which he signifies by it, and, consequently, that we truly receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless they will not seek him as if he were enclosed under the bread, or attached locally to the visible sign. So far from adoring the sacrament, they will rather raise their understandings and their hearts on high, as well to receive Jesus Christ, as to adore him.<sup>15</sup>

Out of this Calvinistic background came the Westminster Confession of Faith. It was drawn up at Westminster in 1643 by the English Parliament, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1649 and has been recognized as the standard interpretation

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<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church, (translated from the original Latin and French by Henry Beveridge), Volume II, p. 192.



of faith for Presbyterian churches up to the present. The Confession drawn up as it was in the seventeenth century, expressed its views in terms characteristic of that period. George S. Hendry in The Westminster Confession for Today outlines four of these:

1. The manner of approach was excessively legalistic.
2. For every question of faith there was only one right answer.
3. The confession tends to see everything in terms of black and white; there were no intermediate shades of gray.
4. The confession tends to view the drama of redemption as one that is played solely between God and the individual.

Because of these shortcomings, the confession is given only formal acceptance by the Presbyterian churches.

The writers of the Confession strongly criticised the position of infallibility held by the Roman church. It would only be fair to conclude that any desire to reinterpret their own position would be readily agreed to by them. Their views on the Lord's Supper were in strong opposition to the current Roman beliefs. Although the statements are mainly a denial of those beliefs there was an attempt made to provide a more acceptable interpretation.

#### CF XXXI, I

Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his church unto the end of the world; for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>George S. Hendry, The Westminster Confession for Today, p. 229.



## CF XXXI, 2

In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead, but a commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the so-called sacrifice of the mass is most contradictory to Christ's one sacrifice, the only propitiation for all the sins of the elect.<sup>17</sup>

## CF XXXI, 6

That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament; and hath been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries.<sup>18</sup>

## CF XXXI, 7

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.<sup>19</sup>

The United Church of Canada's position is not an elaborate one, but one which is "in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures"<sup>20</sup> and contains "the substance of the Christian faith commonly held among us (the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Congregational branches of the Church of Christ in Canada)".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>20</sup> Manual, The United Church of Canada, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



The actual position is defined in Article XVI (2) of the Basis of Union.

The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and His sacrifice on the cross; and they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their comfort, nourishment and growth in grace. All may be admitted to the Lord's Supper who make a credible profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and of obedience to His law.<sup>22</sup>

Although there is a wide divergence in the beliefs held on the Lord's Supper, there is agreement as to its importance. The Sacrament is central to each church's worship of God. Each church considered is desirous of maintaining its own interpretation and jealously guards against any attempt to modify it. The Roman Catholic Church in adhering to transubstantiation appeals to tradition. The Anglican Church with its insistence on "The High Priest and his eternal sacrifice"; the Lutheran Church and its spiritualizing of the act of communion to a point which is considered superior to any other denomination; the Reformed Church and its attempt to correct any false interpretations as well as its desire to maintain a broad basis for interpretation; all these have resulted in positions which are mutually unacceptable. Each can point out the obvious errors of its neighbor's position but any attempt to improve on its own seems paradoxically enough to draw it away from the others.

Fortunately, the positions are only the result of attempts to get beliefs into words. The differences are maintained not so much

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 18.



out of the accuracy of any position as out of human weakness. Each observance of the sacrament is acceptable to God according to the spirit in which it was made. The desired communion with God is achieved not because of the correctness of the observance but simply because God himself desires the communion. Even this view is this writer's own and not necessarily agreed to by the churches under consideration.



## CHAPTER VIII

### AN ATTEMPT AT UNITY

The Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh in 1937 made the following statement, "We regard sacramental intercommunion as a necessary part of any satisfactory church unity."<sup>1</sup> The varying positions on the Eucharist have made intercommunion difficult and in some cases impossible. Unyielding interpretations have caused many stalemates in discussions, but recent attempts to rephrase or re-interpret eucharistic beliefs held by the various communions has led to some hope of eventual unity. The Eastern Orthodox church insists that "fellowship in the sacrament can exist only where there is agreement in doctrine, a mutually acceptable ministry, or organic unity of church life."<sup>2</sup> Yet this same church can state, "however high the partitions that divide Christians may be, they do not reach to heaven."<sup>3</sup>

The two main points which cause the basic differences are the ideas of the sacrifice of Christ and of the Real Presence. These two

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<sup>1</sup> Gustave Aulén, Eucharist and Sacrifice, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



are accepted as being essential to the Eucharist; the differences arise when an effort is made to interpret either of these. As to the sacrifice of Christ, the member churches are one in their rejection of the idea that the Eucharist is a repetition of the sacrifice on Calvary. Agreement, too, is found in the idea that the sacrifice of Christ is not limited to his death but comprises the whole of his life and work and in an effort to describe the action of God in the Eucharist, the scriptures warrant use of sacrificial language. But as to defining the sacrifice the interpretations vary.

Some of us believe that in the Lord's Supper, where they enter into communion with the crucified and risen Lord, they only offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and obedient service as a response in faith to the benefits the Lord gives us. Others would like to insist, however, that in the Holy Eucharist the Lord Jesus Christ as God's great High Priest unites the oblation made by His body, the Church, with His own sacrifice, and so takes up her own adoration into the 'Sanctus' of the company of heaven. Between these two views there are others to which a brief reference may not do full justice.<sup>4</sup>

The stumbling block seems to be the relationship between the 'sacrifice of Christ and the Lord's Supper. The Old Catholic position is that the church's observance of the sacrament re-presents the "continuous efficacy of the sacrifice on the cross."<sup>5</sup> In this representation, states a Reformed theologian, "the church enters into the suffering and death of Christ."<sup>6</sup> To which another Reformed theologian

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



interested in the eschatological viewpoint adds; "As the church militant in this world it participates both in the agony of Golgotha and in the triumph of the Saviour."<sup>7</sup> The latter theologian would draw a distinction between the eucharistic sacrifice and the atoning but unique sacrifice of Christ. We can never participate fully in his sacrifice because "in the awful hour of His agony we know that he dies alone and we are found among those who crucify Him."<sup>8</sup> In this sense, the eucharistic sacrifice can at the most be but a remembrance.

The Anglican church, because of the distinct viewpoints within its own communion, has made the major share of the contributions in this field. Their desire is to reconcile the differences by clarifying the misinterpretations of the Medieval church so strongly criticised by the Reformers, yet trying to "present a concept of sacrifice which is Biblically sound."<sup>9</sup> The conclusion they draw seems to be a restatement of the standard Anglican viewpoint based on the Letter to the Hebrews. The sacrifice of Christ has been accomplished once and for all, the imperfect offering of ourselves is taken by the exalted Christ who pleads the same before God. The concept of Jesus as the Eternal High Priest is a valid one as is the expression "sitting on the right hand of God" which is also used to describe the exalted Lord. The writer feels, however, that to insist on this concept of the High

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 25.



Priest as the only basis for an acceptable interpretation of the Lord's Supper is to disregard the unity of the Godhead and the idea that God himself is active initially "to seek and to save the lost."

Apart from the Ecumenical discussions, Roman Catholic scholars have also made some contributions towards a better understanding of the Eucharist. There has been no marked change in the official position of the church, but the fact that reinterpretations are being made by its own scholars is encouraging in itself. One such scholar has criticised the position that the sacrifice of the mass is in any way a repetition of Christ's sacrifice. For him the sacrifice is a "sacrament rich enough to include the reality of that which it symbolizes."<sup>10</sup> Though the sacrifice of the mass is not considered to be a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, the purpose of offering him is to perfect the worshipper's adoration. The proof of this perfecting comes with the act of transubstantiation. Another Roman scholar also rejects the idea that the mass is a renewal of the Crucifixion. The mass for him is a re-presenting of the sacrifice in such a way that the original sacrifice becomes a reality. As to the participation of the worshipper in the sacrifice, the Roman church as a whole rejects the concept but this same scholar argues in favour of it. In support of his argument he quotes from an encyclical of Pope Pius XII. The changes though minor are not insignificant. They indicate that even in the unyielding position of the Roman church, there is an attempt to compare and, if necessary, to correct its views.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 49.



The sacrificial aspect of the Lord's Supper has been given a great deal of thought. As to the concept of the real presence, there has been very little said. The conference in Edinburgh accepted the fact of the real presence but felt that any attempt to define the nature of the presence would lead to unnecessary division.

The important thing is that we celebrate the Eucharist with the unfailing use of bread and wine, and of prayer, and of the words of institution, and with agreement as to its essential and spiritual meaning.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, the writer feels that whatever be the accepted interpretation of the Lord's Supper, it will come as a result of a constant and patient effort on the part of each communion and the Council as a whole. The writer would agree with a statement from a commission report that "neither we nor the Churches from which we come have yet gone deeply enough into the penitence from which healing may arise."<sup>12</sup> Yet as compelling as Christ's command is with regard to healing the broken body, some communions are not as enthusiastic as others in seeking this unity. These communions must feel that some other command of Christ's has priority. And if this is the case, then the writer would have to agree with the Lutheran position on this matter as being equally valid.

The Lutheran church regards the Lord's Supper as the 'missa fidelium'. Participation in other services or in the first or general part of the Service is a matter of general privilege. The Sacrament itself is offered only to those who have been in-

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Intercommunion, A report of a theological commission of Faith and Order, p. 31.



structed as to its meaning and who desire to receive it and come forward to the altar. The church will not administer it promiscuously in the pews or treat it as a semi-social function, or as an expression of unity which does not exist. No Lutheran would desire to commune at a Roman altar even if permitted; nor will he find spiritual satisfaction in communing in churches which profess a merely memorial or symbolic view of the Sacrament. Church members are encouraged the sacrament in other Lutheran churches as freely as in their own congregations. The significance of the Sacrament as an expression of Christian unity is thus recognized. But since real unity is a matter of faith rather than of organization or emotion, and since unity does not exist among Christian groups in general, intercommunion or open communion is not encouraged.<sup>13</sup>

If an increasing measure of unity and co-operation is to be achieved amongst the churches and in particular with regard to the interpretation and observance of the Lord's Supper, then there are three points that the writer feels will have to be observed. The points may be self-evident but they are important enough to be repeated.

1. Each communion must seek to carry out its Master's wishes as it sees them.
2. Each communion should try to respect the other communion's interpretation of its purpose.
3. Each communion should try through comparison and self-examination to correct any misinterpretations of the "truth that makes men free".

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<sup>13</sup> Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy, p. 231.



## CONCLUSION

The Lord's Supper speaks of the New Covenant. It speaks of it in such an intimate way that it is hard to separate what is purely objective from what in present-day terms would be an existential experience. We can describe it; talk about it; examine it; in fact, we can do anything with the Lord's Supper that can objectively be done with any other feast. But once we share in it, once we partake of the bread and wine, we become involved in the New Covenant. "This is my body given for you; take and eat." "This is my blood shed for you; take and drink." The significance of the words can best be understood in terms of the Old Covenant but a complete understanding is not necessary for one to share in the communion feast.

Without the Old Covenant, the New Covenant obviously enough would have been impossible. Important as the old one was, though, it is not a prerequisite for the new one. The events which took the Old Covenant from the time it was made to the time it was made void also served to mature the ideas involved in this relationship with God. The growth, in the idea that Jahweh was a tribal god and a deliverer of one select group to one that Jahweh was Lord of creation and the redeemer of mankind was made possible only because of the experiences of these people. But once the idea was established it became a legacy to the future and could be inherited by anyone at any time. The significance of the heritage may not be explicitly realized in each case but



an appreciation of what God has done is something that each person can experience for himself. In short then, man, who bears the image of the creator can share at the Lord's table in the redemption made possible by his Lord.

The desire to offer oneself in dedication to God as well as to have communion with him came about in the same way. The desire to offer sacrifices matured, the writer feels, from a haphazard attempt to placate some unknown power to the point where the offering of oneself in complete dedication was considered superior to the offering of animals. Again it was the Israelites who provided the history for this maturing process. Both of these principles form the backbone of the Lord's Supper.

The effect of the Supper on the early Christian congregations was to bind them together in a fellowship. The saving power of God was available to them as individuals, but it was around the table of the Lord that they were nurtured as members of the household of God. The solidarity which the meal produced in the fellowship very strongly resembled that produced by the Jewish Passover. So strong was the influence that the symbolism of the latter was carried over into the former. Even today the meal holds much in common with its foster parent. The Passover, though, was only one of many comparisons that were made of the Lord's Supper. Not only was it a chance to commemorate and to rededicate, it was also an opportunity to have communion; to receive forgiveness; to share in the great heavenly feast to come. In short, the meal provides something for each participant no matter what need he happens to come with.



The early congregations were part of one body. As the years went by, the body was gradually ripped apart. Human weakness was the cause. Each portion gradually adopted its own form of celebrating the Lord's Supper, each with its own reason for so doing. The various interpretations have given each group a certain amount of pride and loyalty. If there were no contact between the various groups then a person would experience no difficulty with the observance. But with the intermingling that is part of twentieth century life, such a position is untenable. On the part of the lay person there is confusion and no doubt a certain amount of conflict. The net result is that while some groups have tightened and elaborated on their own form, others have recognized the desire behind the words "that they might be one" and in a gesture of hopefulness have opened their forms to the critical eyes of history and modern scholarship.

The Roman Catholic scholars can vary very slightly from the official position in their efforts to probe the depths of the Lord's Supper. Minor concessions might be made, but none which would alter its stand that it alone possesses the "true" observance. The Anglican church has done most of the work in the field of trying to provide an interpretation which would be acceptable to the churches concerned. It has more scope to work in than the Roman Catholic counterparts, but it always seems to come up with the accent on the "High Priest and his eternal sacrifice". The United Church has not done very much in the field of interpretation. It prefers to retain the all-inclusive phrase "in essential agreement with the teachings of the scriptures". Although there is a great deal of flexibility in the position, it



suffers at times from having very little to say to other communions which would like something a little more specific. The Lutheran communion has been the most vigorous in its approach. Yet even here, the results are aimed at the enrichment of its own worship rather than their being a contribution to an ecumenical understanding of the sacrament.

After a person has considered the position of each communion, there is also the attitude which has to be looked at as well. It seems to be the attitude which determines whether or not a church is even going to take the trouble to compare the various positions with its own. It is the attitude which decides whether there will be any co-operation, or whether the separation implied in each position will be maintained. The best example of this was the attitude of Pope John XXIII. Prior to Pope John, talks about church unity were tolerated but not with any degree of enthusiasm. With his sponsorship of the Second Vatican Council, the indications were that there would be more co-operation in trying to understand the positions of the various churches.

The view of the early church on the Eucharist seemed to come close to a desired ideal in that the celebration was a corporate one; each member felt an obligation to be there and each one had a part to play in the observance. It was simple, short and performed as a matter of course to the fulfilling of Christ's command. Whether or not this observance would be the desired form of expression in a unified church is hard to say, probably not. The meaning, which is going to provide years of work for committees on union, will have to take into



account not only the period of history since the first observance but also the divergent viewpoints held by the uniting communions. Because of this and the interdependence of the meaning and form, the eventual expression of the Eucharist would be difficult to foresee.

The task of interpretation, quite obviously, has been left with the experts. The task of making the observance a corporate one though, is something which the church as a whole will have to work at. It is not something that can be directed, organized or induced; it must come as the response of the whole Body to the guidance of the Spirit. If this assumption is valid, and the writer feels it is, then there are certain things which can be looked at and either improved, questioned or removed completely. Such a minor point as the congregation deciding to observe the Eucharist would imply that a minister could not properly offer communion on his own initiative. In the United Church itself, this would seriously question our concept of the chaplaincy and their right to conduct the Lord's Supper apart from a congregation.

In view of the study that has been made, the writer is indebted to the views set forward by the authors consulted. The study has clarified many vague points but in the very process has brought other points to light which in turn may be vague. But the whole work has deepened the writer's appreciation of the Lord's Supper and its significance as a sacrament of our church. It has also made the writer sensitive to the problems involved in intercommunion.

The desired unity may be a hoped-for goal to be achieved in the not too distant future. For the writer, however, the eventual unity



and the consummation are identical. Far from being pessimistic, the writer can now approach the Lord's Supper with a far greater understanding as to what is involved. He can respect the problems faced by both the congregation and the minister which have been inherent in our personalistic approach to the sacrament and he can respect the position of the other communions who through doctrinal limitations can not partake at the same table.



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